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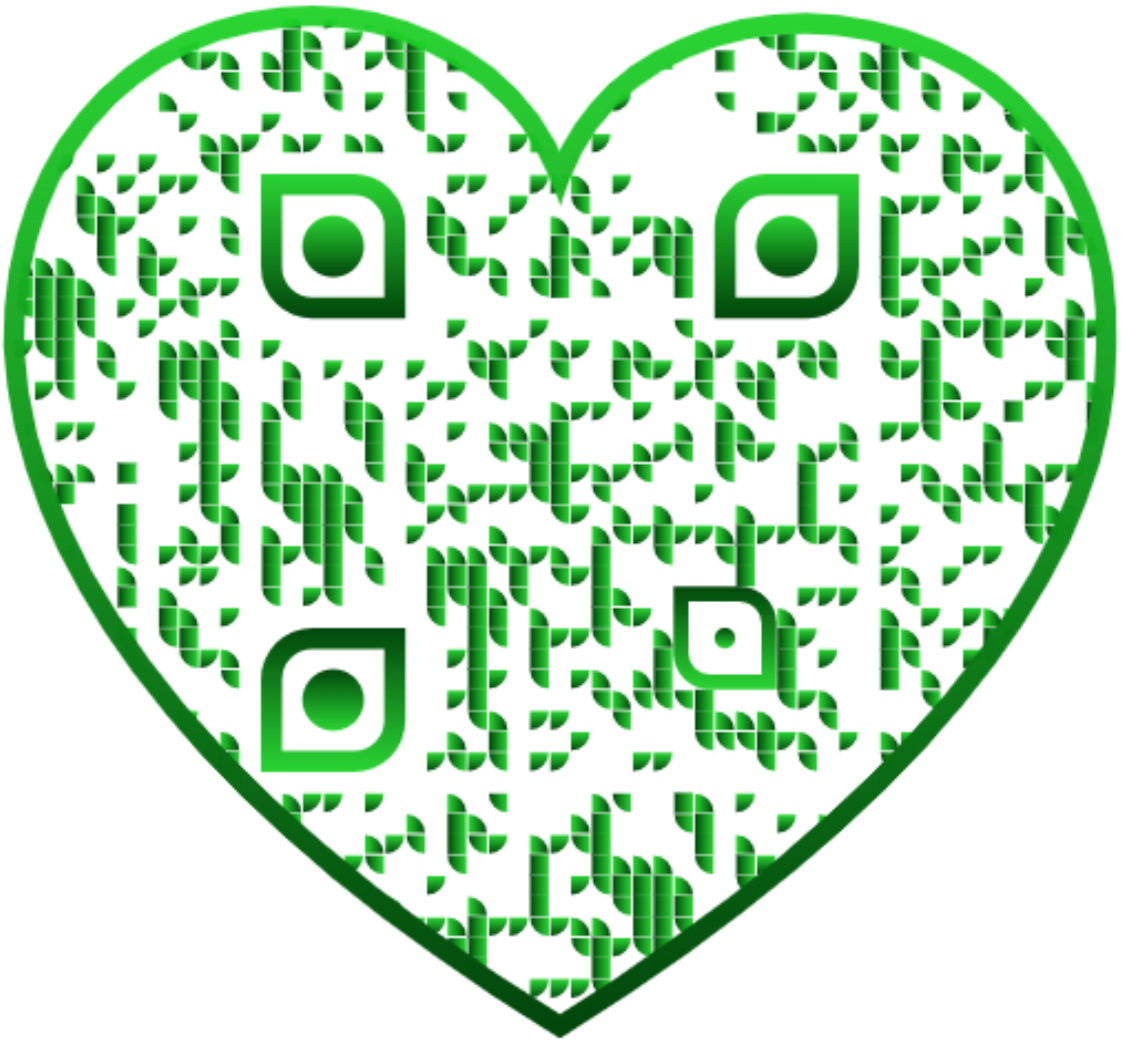

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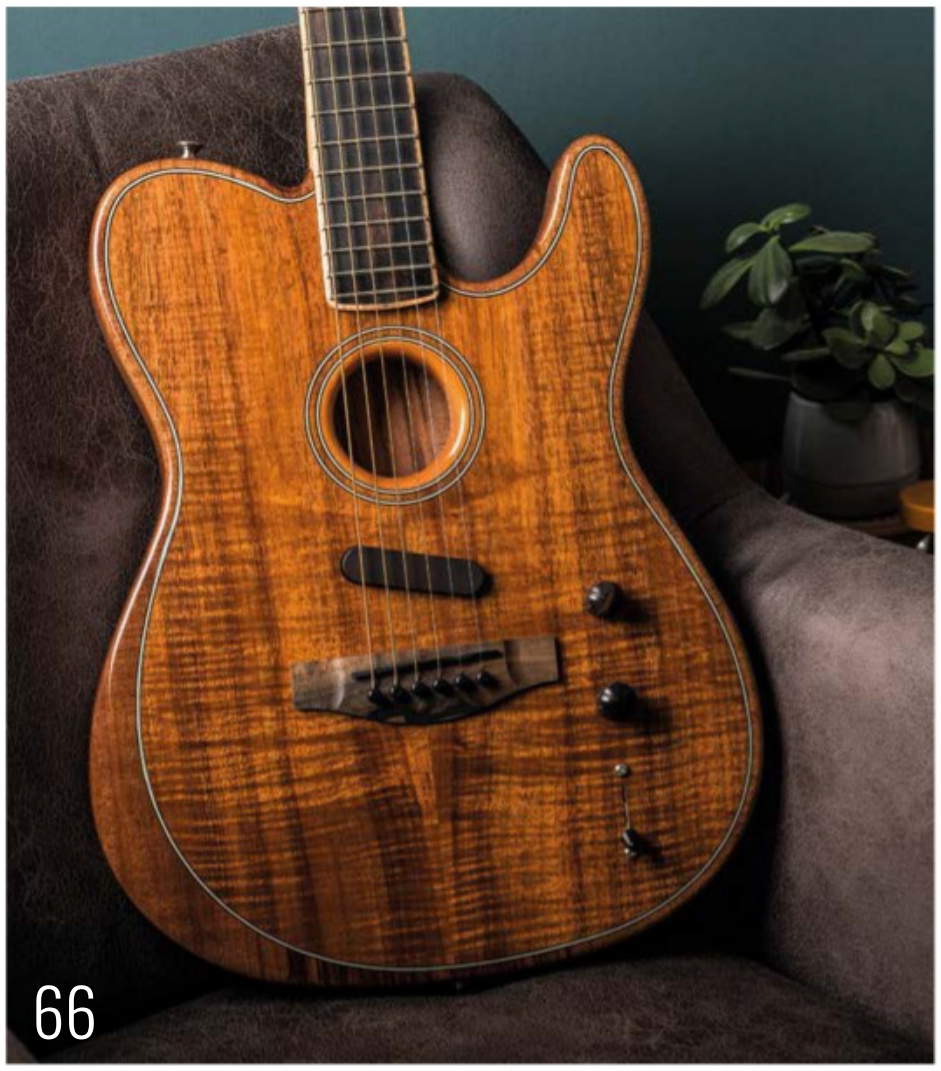
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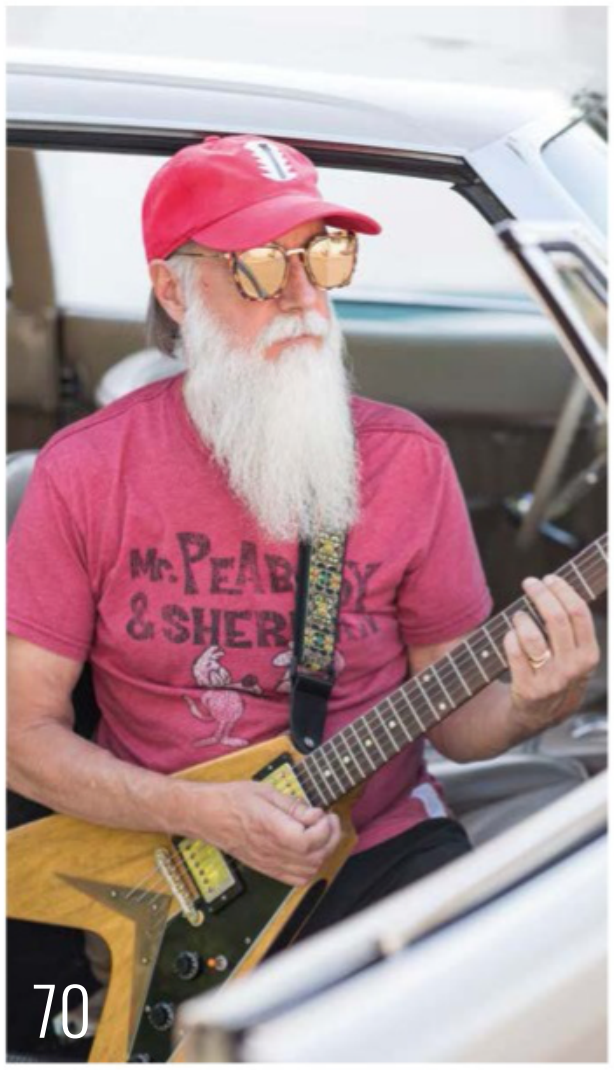
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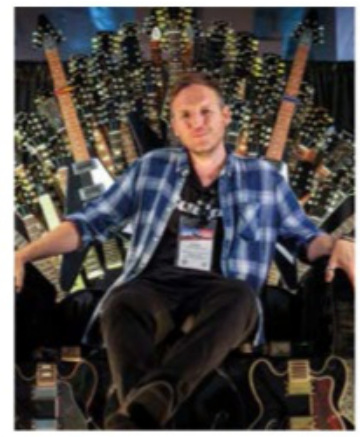

EDITOR'S LETTER

NUTHIN' BUT AN SG THANG

The Gibson SG Standard is the Nashville company's best-selling guitar of all time. Surprised? Although you might think it would be the Les Paul, the SG has more years of continuous production behind it and has always been the more affordable option. People might point to aspects of the design that make it a somewhat fragile creature, but that hasn't stopped the SG featuring on some of the greatest and most incendiary rock records of all time.

As well as reeling off a list of the SG's greatest hits, this month's celebration of Gibson's horned red devil includes an in-depth look at three of the company's fantastic new Original Collection models. We also reveal what the likes of Tony Iommi, Derek Trucks, Jimmy Page and Johnny Marr think of the iconic best-seller. Special thanks to Matt Martin for the loan of his Harley-Davidson motorcycle – another stone cold rock 'n' roll icon – for our photoshoot. The festivities begin on p20.

Elsewhere this month, we talk to artists old and new in the shape of Foals, Hank Marvin and Ian Noe and check out hot new gear from the likes of Kemper, Supro, Eastman and Fender. And if you've ever wondered to yourself what a guitar and banjo double-neck might look like – and who hasn't? – then turn to p125 immediately!

Finally, on a sad note, our art editor John Thackray soon heads off to pastures new. Thackers did a fantastic job of redesigning the magazine at the tail end of last year and we'll miss his peerless expertise when it comes to craft beer, The Dandy Warhols and Barnet FC. I'm sure you'll join myself and the rest of the team in wishing him all the best for the future.

Chris Vinnicombe
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FRETBUZZ

Your letters and observations on the world of guitar

Join the conversation Email us at editors@guitar.com

VINTAGE VOICES

Dear *Guitar Magazine*, I wanted to drop you a line to thank you for the excellent buying vintage feature you carried in last month's magazine [Issue 363]. I've owned various vintage guitars over the years, but I've always wondered whether I was doing it 'right', and the mix of practical and more philosophical advice from your various contributors was really encouraging, and certainly hasn't helped my GAS since I read it!

I particularly appreciated how much of the advice encouraged people to get into vintage guitars for the love of it, not for the sake of speculation or the desire to turn a buck by sitting on something for a few years. I also appreciated Kris Blakely's advice to not worry about buying 'cool' guitars when buying vintage.

Back in the 90s, I bought my 1963 Fiesta Red Jaguar for an absolute bargain price, because back then, nobody wanted offsets full-stop, let alone short-scale ones – but I loved it then, I still love it now, and even if it was now worth half what I bought it for, I'd still be happy.

Of course, the reality is that offset guitars have experienced something of a resurgence in recent years, and now my guitar is probably worth 10 times what I bought it for!

Because I followed my heart and went for something that I truly loved, even though I could make a handsome profit on my Jaguar by selling it today, I don't think I ever could. Vintage guitars have a way of getting under your skin – they feel unique and special, and if you get into them for the right reasons, it can be a wonderfully rewarding pastime.

JAMES GRAYSON, VIA EMAIL

HEADSTOCK AND BARREL

This month, fans on the *Guitar.com* social channels were awash with opinions on Gibson's rumoured plans to bring the classic open-book headstock to its Epiphone range of guitars…

If they do this, Epiphone will be the top-selling brand in the world and there is no downside. Waiting all these years cost them millions, no doubt. Just do it already. And take my money!

SETH STIMSON, VIA FACEBOOK

Everybody knows Epiphone is owned by Gibson, so why don't they just brand the guitars that are straight Gibson copies – Les Pauls, SGs etc – as Gibson? Leave the specific Epiphone lines as Epiphone. Gretsch have done it with the Streamliner range, Fender also have several models at different price points and it hasn't hurt them. This way, you maintain the brand loyalty with those who can't afford the eye-watering prices for USA Gibsons.

WILLIAM H BONNEY, VIA FACEBOOK

If they do this, I hope that the new headstocks aren't bigger than Gibson's, as they are at the moment. It's annoying to have some Epiphone LPs that won't fit in an LP case!

JAMES VEGEAIS, VIA FACEBOOK

Here's a thought: let Epiphone be its own brand again. Let it build Casinos, Sheratons, Wilshires, Crestwoods and even the Genesis. That new DC Pro model was a big step in the right direction. If a new Epiphone model is being developed or designed, make sure it's taking elements from Epiphone's history and not Gibson's. Then Gibson should bring back the Orville brand for future overseas-built copies of its designs, such as the Les Paul and SG. Keep the Epiphone name off of the headstocks of these models.

BLAKE NOBLE, VIA FACEBOOK

Hopefully, Epiphone will also use the classic flared headstock for some of their models, as it's a classic shape for Epiphone electrics; and reserve the clipped edge one for upper-level Epiphone archtops such as the Sheraton and Broadway.

KELLY IZAJ, VIA FACEBOOK

I honestly prefer that open-book headstock. It's looking like Epiphone is really going back to its roots and that's definitely not a bad thing, as long as they stay affordable.

MARC FENTIMAN, VIA FACEBOOK

Maybe I'm dumb, but I have avoided buying an Epiphone all these years because the headstocks ruin the aesthetics of the guitars.

KYLE JOSEPH TRUEBA, VIA FACEBOOK

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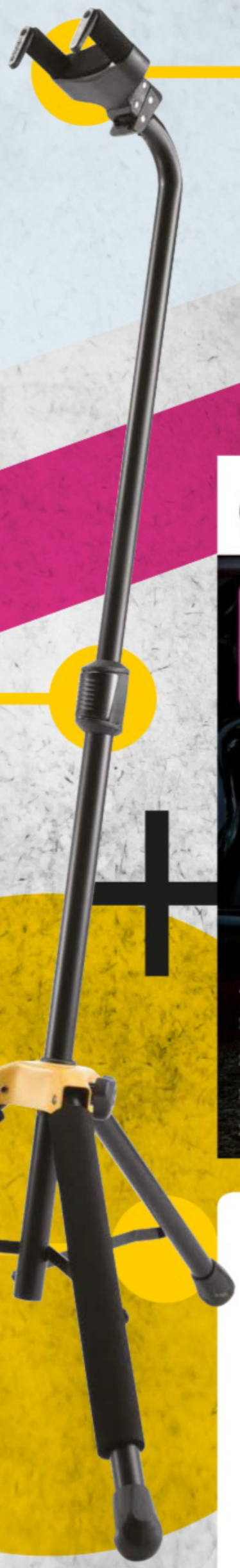

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ONES TO WATCH

JJ WILDE @JJWILDECHILD

INTERVIEW SAM ROBERTS

The LA-based musician on her brother's influence, not pursuing an ordinary career and writing over 500 songs for her debut release

Despite now being signed to Black Box/BMG, JJ Wilde's musical career hasn't gone as smoothly as you may think. Back in 2018, she came to a crossroads where she almost left the industry behind for good.

That was until she briefly attempted to go back to school, which resulted in an epiphany that pushed her to write over 500 songs in the lead up to her debut EP, *Wilde Eyes, Steady Hands*.

Her work ethic has resulted in a raw, sometimes cathartic body of work that has defined her journey and helped convey her unapologetic view of the world. "I just wanted it to be raw," Wilde says.

Here, she tells us how her brother helped kick-start her musical journey, about choosing to stray away from an ordinary career and how she recorded her debut EP in a little over a week.

What first drew you to guitar?
"My older brother played guitar and I always looked up to him. I loved the sound and was always interested in how he could make so many different sounds with one instrument."

You've been writing music for a while. What were your early influences?
"My early influences were a lot of what my parents were listening to at the time, which was classic rock, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon… then I went more towards acoustic singer-songwriter-style musicians. Damien Rice was a huge influence. As I grew older, my influences and musical preferences changed and evolved from folk, pop, rock, rap, classical, basically everything! Norah Jones was also a great influence for a strong female vocal, as well as Amy Winehouse and Janis Joplin."

Was there an epiphany moment before you chose to pursue music full time?
"There was, actually! I'd been in bands before and tried solo shows, playing locally around my city and touring Canada with previous bands. When my band fizzled out, I pursued a solo career but became frustrated playing local shows and not hailing much else. I was also working three jobs and playing gigs two or three times a week! After two years of running on that hamster wheel, I reached a breaking point,

"I MAINLY LIKE FENDERS FOR THEIR PUNCHY, TREBLY TONES, BUT I'M ALSO A SUCKER FOR THE WARM LIVED-IN-COUCH FEEL THAT ONLY HUMBUCKERS CAN BRING TO THE TABLE"

a realisation that this wasn't working and I needed to make a change.

"My first thought was to explore my options of going back to school and when I did, I quickly realised that I wouldn't be happy doing anything other than music. Sure, a career seemed sensible and comfortable, but during the meeting I had a sinking feeling of 'well, this isn't what I want'. From that day on, I chose that no matter where it took me, broke or not, I was going to pursue music, however I could."

You amassed over 500 songs before your debut EP. How did you choose what made the cut?
"Honestly, choosing the songs for the EP wasn't as difficult a process as you might think. I had a great deal of material and had compiled a short list of songs I wanted to start with. My producer Frederik Thaae also did the same thing and when I got to LA, we cross-referenced our lists to see what songs we both liked. After that, it was a very organic process of choosing a song to start the day with and see where we got with it. Some we wrote and finished in the studio, really it was whatever songs came freely. If we hit a wall with one idea, we would take a break from it and work on another. By not forcing the songs, we ended up with a clear distinction of what ones to run with."

You also finished recording it in just eight days. How was that experience?
"Recording it in such a short amount of time was a rush, to say the least. It was great, because it didn't leave any time for second-guessing our decisions, which can happen all too often with creative ideas. It was all feel – if something felt good, we would run with it.

"Although there is something nice about being able to sit with an idea for a while and add to it, for my first project I'm glad we did it this way. I had something to say and we got it out as quick as possible."

It feels like there's a lot of pent-up emotion on *Wilde Eyes, Steady Hands*. Is that something you were trying to convey?
"I wasn't trying intentionally to have that, but it's definitely there. I think the pent up emotion comes from years of pursuing the same passion and getting nowhere. Knowing that I wanted to do this, but not knowing how exactly, was a huge struggle.

"I think it's something that many people go through in different ways, being unhappy with the current state of your life and trying to figure out how to change things. All of my music comes from personal experience, thoughts and feelings. I'm a person that wears their heart on their sleeve, so I'm not surprised that comes through in the music, even if it's not intentional."

Is the guitar your main instrument for composition?
"It is! I've always written on guitar. I've toyed with the idea of using a piano for my writing and have written a few songs using one, but my main inspiration and instrument is guitar."

What guitars and amplifiers are you currently using?
"For writing, I use my Fender T-Bucket acoustic and a Taylor, but my first guitar was a Tanglewood and I still use it for writing. As far as stage goes, my guitars vary. I mainly like Fenders for their punchy, trebly tones, but I'm also a sucker for the warm lived-in-couch feel that only humbuckers can bring to the table."

What's next for you?
"*Lots* more music! The next thing for me is touring as much as possible and writing, of course. I'm always writing! I have new music on the way, but I'm waiting for the right time to release it. This is just the start and I really can't wait to see where this journey takes me."

JJ Wilde's debut EP *Wilde Eyes, Steady Hands* is out now on Black Box Recordings

THE PLAYLIST

ALBUM SPOTLIGHT

OPETH IN CAUDA VENENUM

INTERVIEW SAM ROBERTS

Swedish metal maestro Fredrik Åkesson reveals why Opeth chose to include jazz chord changes and offset Fenders on their 13th studio album

Recorded at Stockholm's Park Studios, Opeth's 13th long player, *In Cauda Venenum*, was written in both the Swedish and English language. It follows 2016's *Sorceress*, which charted at number 11 in the UK and entered the Top 10 in Germany.

One of 2019's most anticipated metal albums, it sees the band rediscover their passion for guitars, with both Fredrik and Michael using amplifiers built by their neighbours along with vintage Gibsons and, surprisingly, a Fender Mustang or two. Affable guitarist Fredrik Åkesson tells us about his favourite parts on the album…

MINNETS YTA/LOVELORN CRIME

"That was a ballad solo. I tried to do something that's more of an emotional type of solo. Before I put down the demo solo for that song, Michael told me, 'I want you to play it so that people remember you for it when you die.' I said: 'Thank you for the pressure, mate!' But he was very happy with it, and I'm happy with as well. I went for a bit of a Gilmour/Gary Moore type of approach here."

SVEKETS PRINS/DIGNITY

"I bought a Flying V from '83, a black one with a korina body. It's a '58 reissue, where the strings go through the body. I use that for the rhythms on *Dignity*, but I'm actually pretty happy with the solo in this song. The first solo on the album is quite different, because it's more playing over chords, instead of having a part that's in the same key. When I improvised that solo, I wrote down the chord chart and looked at it, switched chords and just went for it! That's what ended up on the album, but I had to relearn it and I pimped it up a little bit. Compared to earlier Opeth solos, I'd say it's different."

HJÄRTAT VET VAD HANDEN GÖR/HEART IN HAND

"I went for a more aggressive approach here, more of a Strat type of solo. It's more of a metal/hard-rock type of tune and I like that there's a good blend of different approaches with the solos on the album. It all depends on what the song is like, basically, but I think that one's more driven. I felt like it needed some of that aggressive touch to it. It has kind of an edgy, chunky guitar tone there, but the weird thing is that we were both using a Fender Mustang!"

KONTINUERLIG DRIFT/CONTINUUM

"This is also one of the more aggressive solos. It has some kind of energy I was trying to fetch and it says something to me at least, I hope the listeners enjoy it as well. This amp builder lives near-walking distance from my house and I've been working with him for a couple of years on the gain structure of an amp that we put out called a Little Hill. The brand is called Olsson Amps, made by John Olsson. We've managed to find a gain structure that I'm really happy with it, as it's suitable for metal, hard rock, classic rock, everything. It has great sustain and even though there's a lot of gain it has nice separation with chords. Right before we went into the studio, John asked me if he could put together a 100-watt amp with that gain structure to see what what it sounds like. We did it very quickly, got into the studio, compared it with a lot of other amps and it won the race, basically. That's what we use for the rhythm guitars and it's the only one of those amps in the world!"

BANEMANNEN/THE GARROTER

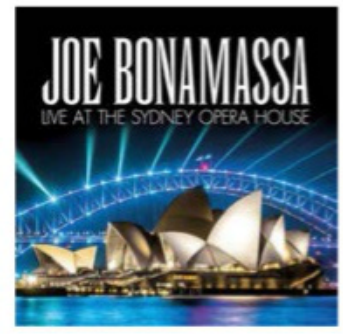
"I think the ultimate track on the album is *The Garroter*, which is a more dark, jazzy, spooky type of song. There's these kind of jazz chords in the chorus and some more jazzy licks that pop up here and there, I think about three of them. I hadn't really played that on an Opeth album before. I'm not really a jazz player, I can never figure it out. I have to sit down and think about it, but I'm interested in it and I try to work on it when we have long periods of not touring. It needed something more like that, rather than more of a rock solo. So we thought about some different chords and playing over half-diminished flat chords and going in between those kind of modes into that dominant-seven type of thing. I recorded those parts with a big Gibson 335 through an old Maestro amp."

***In Cauda Venenum* is out 27 September on Moderbolaget/Nuclear Blast**

This month's essential tracks for guitar lovers…

NEIL YOUNG
Rainbow Of Colors
Young's bonus, non-album single ahead of his forthcoming LP *Colorado* was recorded live, complete with Old Black. This taster already has fans eager for what's to come…

INHALER
Ice Cream Sundae
Bono's son Elijah Hewson and co are pulling out all the stops on a synth-laden indie banger that's perfect to soundtrack those solemn September nights.



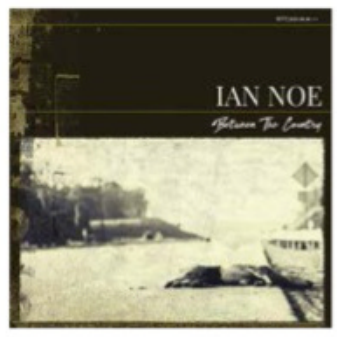
JOE BONAMASSA
This Train (Live)
Taken from *Live At The Sydney Opera House*, this opens with a sultry piano part before Joe enters with a characterful, face-melting guitar solo and country-style chords.

SAM FENDER
The Borders
The North Shields native's long awaited debut is finally here. His latest single, *The Borders*, is a euphoric, chorus-drenched track that echoes Springsteen and Tom Petty.

THE BIG MOON
Your Light
The Big Moon's debut was nominated for the Mercury Prize and new single *Your Light* sees them head down a more electronic-led route, with indie guitars and sweet vocals.

FOALS
The Runner
Stars of our Guitar Interview on p40, Foals are back with a bouncing, fuzzy riff monster underpinned by classic Foals tremolo picking and Yannis's signature vocals.

BOMBAY BICYCLE CLUB
Eat, Sleep, Wake (Nothing But You)
BBC have returned following their five-year hiatus with this single built around pulsating rhythms and fuzzy guitar lines – Bombay are back at their best.



IAN NOE
Letter To Madeline
Noe's introspective single has vocals reminiscent of John Prine and guitar work that recalls Neil Young and The Avett Brothers. Read our interview on p52.

FRANKIE COSMOS
So Blue
Sounding like the perfect soundtrack to an angsty teen movie, this Frankie Cosmos cut features twisted guitars and barely sung vocals, conjuring up a summery vibe.

THE DARKNESS
Heart Explodes
Described by the band as a mini rock opera, the lead single from their new LP has acoustic guitars and mandolins, big powerchords and a dual-guitar solo.

WEEZER
The End Of The Game
Weezer's new album is entitled *Van Weezer* – and Rivers Cuomo and Brian Bell enjoy channelling their inner Halen, with bombastic shredding and tapping from the off.

REFUSED
REVOO1
The second single from Refused's imminent album *War Music* has lilting vocals and brutal riffery that sounds as fresh as when the band first burst onto the scene in 1994.

COMPETITION

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Although it seems like we've been waiting aeons for EHX to reissue its various Muff iterations of yesteryear, we didn't expect so many to show up in such a short burst. You now have a variety of options, from sliced-speaker offerings to zippy and velcro-like alternatives.

The Triangle Big Muff Pi is a faithful recreation of the pedal that started it all. Perfect for psychedelic rock or driving powerchords, this variation does it all.

The Attack Decay is a reissue of a short-lived 80s model. With a knob assigned to both attack and decay, you can shape your sound with surgical precision, while also adding a blend control to smooth out any hairiness with your dry signal. Poly mode makes every note trigger its own envelope; Mono mode resets the envelope with each note.

Finally, the Tone Corset is an all-analogue OTA compressor that has a particularly organic squash. The four-knob design allows for much more tonal manipulation than your average compressor, while the blend knob ensures you can retain the integrity of your killer guitar tones.

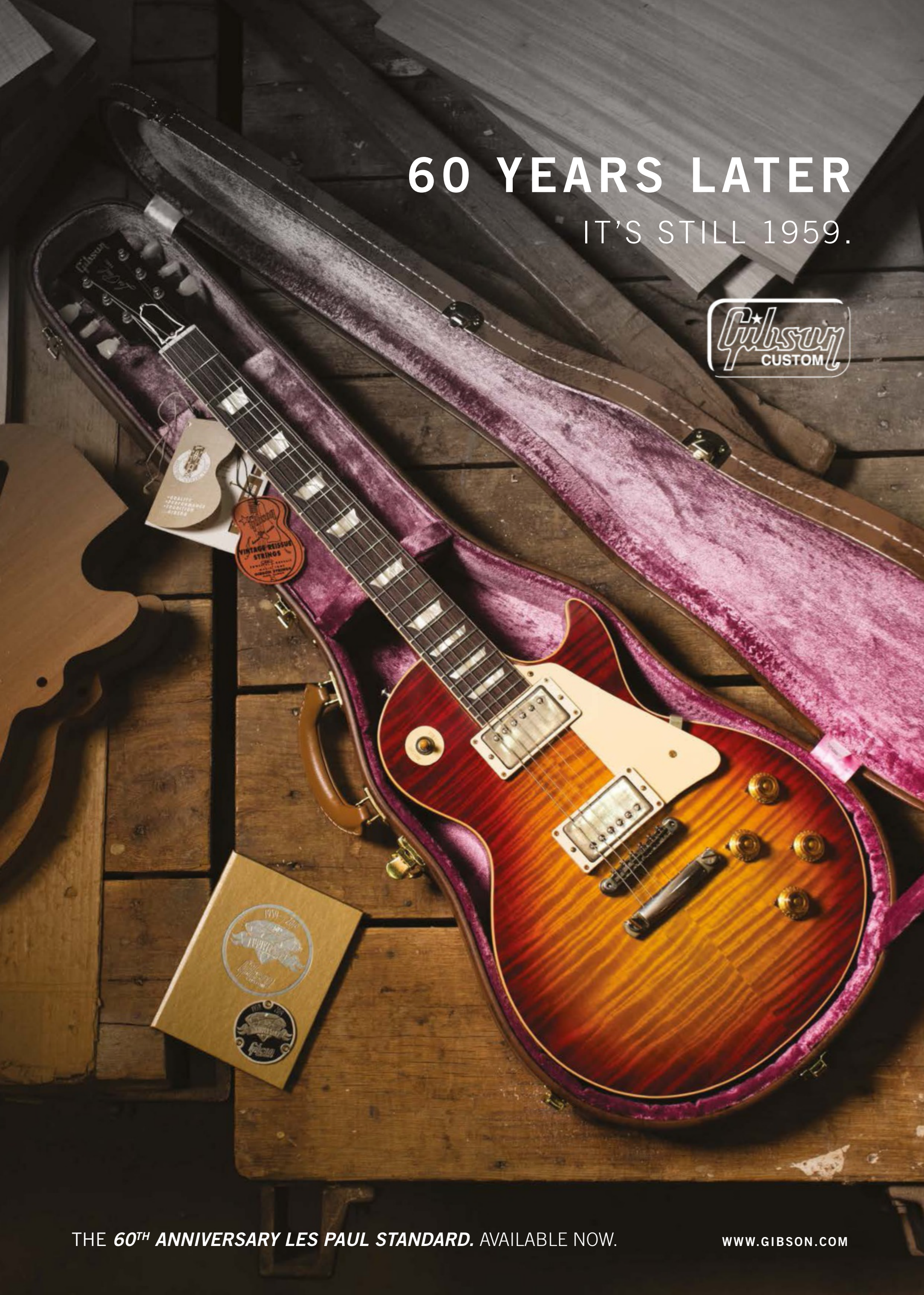
To enter the competition for a chance to win all three pedals, go to guitar.com/news/competitions/three-ehx-pedals, answer the question below and fill out the form.

In what year was the Triangle Big Muff Pi originally released?
A 1968 **B** 1969 **C** 1973

The closing date for this competition is 23.59 BST, 1 November 2019. Good luck!

Terms & Conditions

The closing date is **23.59 BST, 1 November 2019.** The editor's decision is final. The competition is open to UK residents only. When entering *Guitar Magazine* competitions, you will be given the option to receive details of future promotions from BandLab UK Limited and related third parties. If you do not want to receive this information, you can opt out. This giveaway is open to over 18s only. For full terms and conditions, please go to bnd.la/gm-ctos.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VINTAGE REISSUE
STRINGS
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THE DEVIL MAKES THREE

The last 12 months have seen major changes at Gibson Brands Inc, with the company's Original Collection intended to give Gibson fans the guitars they want at prices that won't break the bank. As we head towards 2020, does this horned trio of red devils prove that a vintage-style SG can still deliver the goods?

WORDS HUW PRICE **PHOTOGRAPHY** ELEANOR JANE

Knowing what your customer wants is one of the keys to any successful business, but over the last couple of decades, it often felt like Gibson wasn't listening. Relentless model year updates, gimmicky tech and undesirable changes to the classic recipe – not to mention a general perception among the guitar-buying public of falling QC standards – made for a baffling array of models and a perception that if you wanted Gibson to make 'em like it used to, the premium prices of the Custom Shop were the only option.

A change of management so often brings a change of mindset and here, it's a change for the better. With Gibson's electric-guitar product line-up now streamlined into the Original, Modern and Custom Shop Collections, vintage features no longer come only at near-vintage prices. Here, we're looking at a trio of reasonably-priced SGs from the Original Collection featuring hand-wired controls, vintage-correct neck profiles and lightweight Fijian mahogany. Time to dive in…

STUDENT TONE

As you might expect from its stripped-back specifications, the 'student' model SG Junior is the lightest of our three review guitars by some margin. Even the headstock is a fraction smaller – it's slightly narrower across the top. The neck profile is a little rounder than the other two instruments, with a slightly fuller 'C', rather than a flat and wide 'D'. Handling the neck's soft, vintage-style shoulders,

KEY FEATURES

SG STANDARD '61 MAESTRO VIBROLA
PRICE £1,649 (including hard-shell case)
DESCRIPTION Solidbody electric guitar. Made in the USA
BUILD Fijian mahogany body, mahogany set neck with 'Slim Taper' profile, 12" radius bound rosewood fingerboard with pearl inlays and 22 frets
HARDWARE Tune-o-matic bridge, Maestro Vibrola vibrato tailpiece, vintage-style tuners
ELECTRONICS Burstbucker 61R (neck) and 61T (bridge) humbucking pickups, individual volume and tone controls, 3-way toggle switch
SCALE LENGTH 629mm/24.75"
NECK WIDTH 43.4mm at nut, 53.6mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 20mm at first fret, 22.5mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 35.5mm at nut, 52mm at bridge
WEIGHT 3.6kg/7.9lb
LEFT HANDERS No
FINISHES Vintage Cherry

9/10 **An expressive vibrato and articulate and versatile vintage-toned pickups make this an inspiring SG**

it's pleasing to note that Gibson can still cut it with the best – both past and present – when it comes to neck profiles. It feels very vintage, in the best sense and that impression is reinforced when the frets are viewed from the sides.

They have that wide-but-low look of old wire, but they're plenty high enough for bending strings and you don't get that 'speed bump' feel as your fingers slide along the fretboard. Although they're seated well enough and nicely crowned, we do think a few extra minutes with a file would raise comfort levels even further. Both the Standard models have fret nibs, so it's only an issue for the Junior.

The published specs for all three guitars include Orange Drop tone capacitors and Gibson has worked on the pot tapers for a more vintage-style response. The wiring certainly appears very vintage-correct, with black trunking and yellow plastic insulation on the ground wires. On our review model, however, the Junior's tone capacitor is tiny and light blue – we'd guess it's probably ceramic. Given that Gibson's attempt at intonation compensation during the 1960s was optimised for wound-G string sets, the uncompensated bridge we have here is actually preferable and the intonation sounds just fine.

DOUBLE WHAMMY

When is an SG not an SG? It's understandable that Gibson would want to avoid confusion in its 2019 product range, but back in 1961, when this version of the SG was first introduced, it was actually the new Les Paul Standard.

This was the sleek, streamlined and modernistic guitar that was designed to replace those 'shrunk-in-the-wash' jazzboxes known as Goldtops and 'Bursts (after all, they were not doing great business for Gibson at the time). The very earliest examples of the new model even had Les Paul's name on the truss-rod cover, but here it's left plain.

The first of our twin-humbucker SG Standard '61 reissues features the Maestro Vibrola with a Lyre engraved on the tailpiece cover. In addition, there's a 'Slim Taper' mahogany neck with a bound rosewood fingerboard and a 22nd-fret neck joint. The hardware is nickel-plated and the Burstbucker 61R and 61T humbuckers are designed for "a classic voice with added power and top end". Aside from its infamous lateral-motion vibrato system, all the specifications for the Sideways Vibrola model are identical to the Maestro-equipped instrument.

As luck would have it, we have a vintage 1961 Maestro Vibrola-equipped SG on hand to compare with the reissue models. The weights are fairly similar, with the old and new guitars measuring 3.25kg/7.16lb and 3.33kg/7.34lb respectively. There are, however, a few aesthetic differences. The headstock on the vintage model is wider, whereas the reissue headstock has less of that 'paddle' look. The pickguard shapes are different, too, with the longer vintage guard extending closer towards the pickup-selector switch and conforming more closely to the body outline.

OPPOSITE The models equipped with vibratos have vintage-style tuners with double-line casings and single-line buttons

ABOVE TOP The SG Standard '61 Maestro Vibrola paired with what else? A Harley-Davidson Sportster

On all three of our review models, the tuners are Gibson's current standard fittings, which are more vintage-inspired than vintage-accurate. It's certainly not worth losing sleep over, but a more pedantic reissue might have tuners with single-line casings and double-ring buttons. The machineheads on these guitars are the other way around, with double-line casings and single-line buttons, apart from the Junior, which has the simpler-styled buttons reserved for 'student' models.

Rather than a press-fit ring, the tuner bushings have a washer and bolt configuration, which no doubt adds a little mass to the headstocks, but not enough to cause issues with neck dive.

IN USE

In the world of electric-guitar construction, combining lightweight mahogany with an aluminium wrapover tailpiece is as close to a dead cert as it gets. Even so, this Junior's unplugged tone is nothing short of astonishing – strum any chord and vibrations can be felt through the body and neck.

KEY FEATURES

SG STANDARD '61 SIDEWAYS VIBROLA
PRICE £1,649 (including hard-shell case)
DESCRIPTION Solidbody electric guitar. Made in the USA
BUILD Fijian mahogany body, mahogany set neck with 'Slim Taper' profile, 12" radius bound rosewood fingerboard with pearl inlays and 22 frets
HARDWARE Tune-o-matic bridge, Sideways Vibrola tailpiece, vintage-style tuners
ELECTRONICS Burstbucker 61R (neck) and 61T (bridge) humbucking pickups, individual volume and tone controls, 3-way toggle switch
SCALE LENGTH 629mm/24.75"
NECK WIDTH 43.4mm at nut, 53.5mmat 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 20mm at first fret, 22.5mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 35.5mm at nut, 52mm at bridge
WEIGHT 3.3kg/7.3lb
LEFT HANDERS No
FINISHES Vintage Cherry

8/10 **A darker, smoother tone that's classic SG, but the Sideways Vibrola is largely decorative**

The tonality is bright and chiming, but things get woody through the mids and there's plenty of bass depth. The sustain greatly impresses and, with its perfect playability and sublime neck profile, the experience is very much akin to playing a flawless vintage model.

There are no real surprises when we plug in, and frankly, we wouldn't want any. The P-90 is hot without being over the top; there's a strong midrange push, growling lows and plenty of bite in the upper mids and treble for articulation.

We compare it with the bridge P-90 in a 1962 ES-330 and it has to be said that the SG Junior acquits itself very well. The modern P-90 falls slightly short in terms of clarity and depth of tone, but it's a high bar indeed and the modern unit is still a very decent pickup. It also cleans up without losing clarity when the volume control is backed off and there's more than enough tone control range to dial in a bright amp tone, set the tone control about halfway and use it as a faux pickup switch.

There's quite a difference between the unplugged tones of the two Vibrola-equipped Standards. With the Sideways vibrato onboard, the tone is pleasant enough, but the airy treble sheen of the Maestro-equipped model is pretty much absent. The Sideways Vibrola model has a warmer and more compressed response very much in line with what we have come to associate with many SGs, both new and old.

Unfortunately, our vintage 1961 SG is loaded with non-original pickups and unplugged comparisons

are complicated by it having nylon rather than metal saddles. With all Tune-o-matic equipped Gibsons, the saddle material has a significant sonic influence.

The Maestro-equipped reissue actually sounds brighter and has a more clearly defined attack at the front of the note. In contrast, the vintage model is even warmer and woodier, and there's a touch less sustain. Based on previous parts-swapping experiments, we're certain that these characteristics would transfer from one guitar to the other if we swapped over the bridges.

Plugged in, the fact that the modern Maestro and Sideways Vibrola models sound so different through an amp can be attributed to the quality of Gibson's factory pickups. A pleasing amount of microphony, combined with vintage output, allows each guitar's acoustic qualities to come through.

Both sound like unusually good SGs, with that throaty growl on the low strings for raunchy riffing and an articulate bite that makes single notes cut through without sounding shrill. There's plenty of tonal contrast between the bridge and neck and in authentic vintage-style the bridge can sound a touch too bright at times. Rather than a drawback, we consider this welcome headroom and, like Joe Bonamassa, we're inclined to play with the bridge tone control slightly dialled back to emphasise the midrange bark.

The volume controls do have a genuinely old-school response and in the middle position, it's so easy to notch back the neck volume control to produce a pleasing quackiness. But as much as we enjoy the Sideways Vibrola model's fluty warmth and smooth characteristics, the natural airiness of the Maestro model is so much more engaging and opens the guitar up for shimmering cleans as well as darker dirt.

In combination with the excellent control response, the Maestro model can produce a stunning range of sounds. In fact, it's one of the most enjoyable and engaging humbucker-equipped SGs we have ever played. And yes, you can include all original vintage examples in that list.

There are plenty of encouraging signs that Gibson is moving in the right direction. Although there's nothing new about any of these SGs, at the same time, there's a freshness and finesse that makes them hard to fault. The slightly faded cherry finish is consistent across all three guitars and we love it. It's not too red, nor is it too washed out – it's just about perfect.

We would also note that the quality of the finish is a lot better than we've seen on some Gibsons in recent years, because it feels thin, perfectly flat and there isn't even a hint of 'orange peel'.

Our one gripe – and it doesn't apply to the Junior – is Gibson's persistent use of slightly peach-coloured binding. We can only assume that years ago, a bean-counter secured a killer deal on the condition that Gibson purchased colossal quantities of the stuff. We can only hope that supplies are almost used up or that somebody in authority will finally call time and enforce Gibson's return to off-white binding.

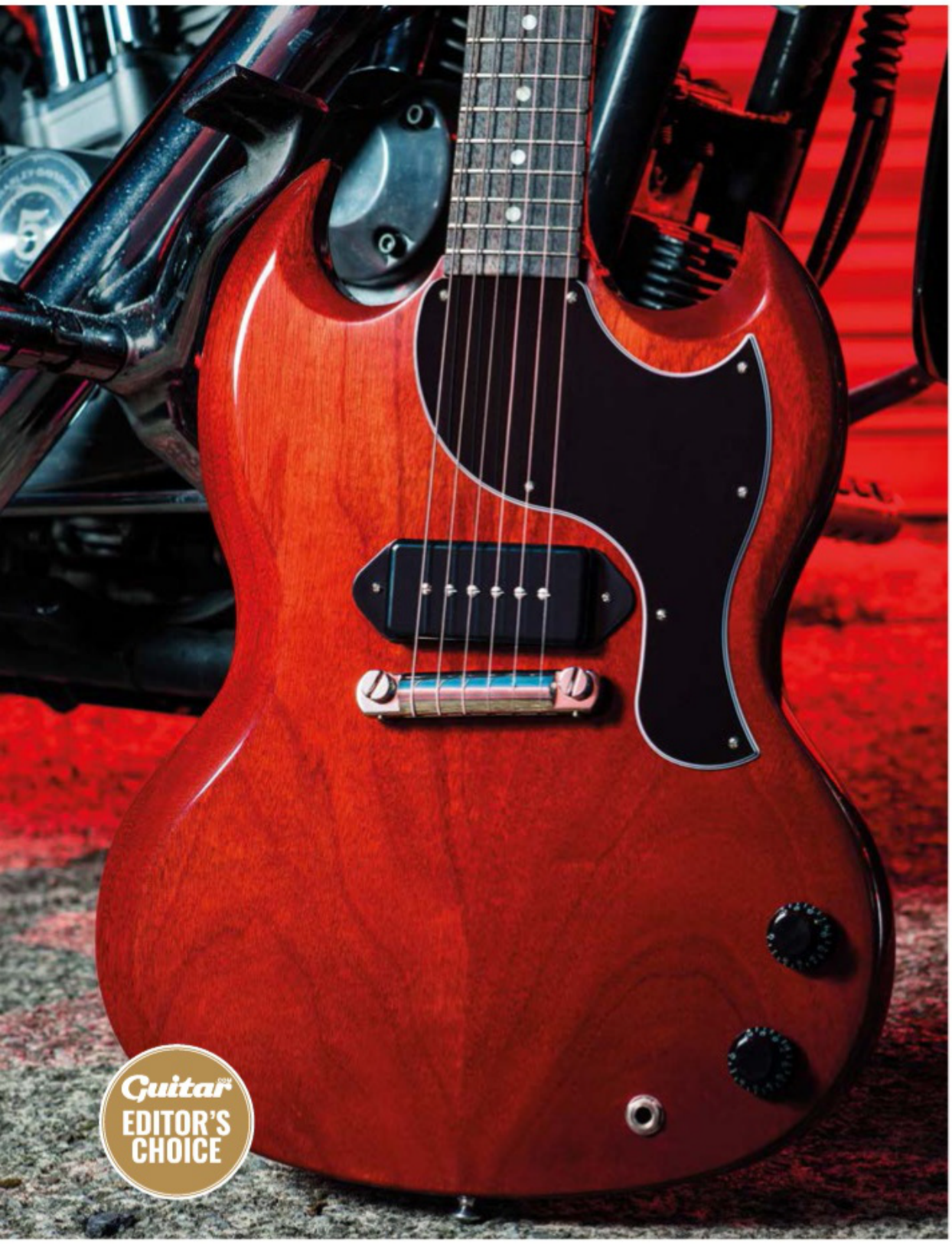
Having two SGs spec'd identically besides their vibrato units gives us a rare opportunity to compare the Maestro with the Sideways Vibrola. We have a clear preference and would choose the Maestro every time. Although overshadowed by Bigsbys and the various Fender systems, the Maestro is actually a very usable and impressively stable whammy bar.

OPPOSITE The SG Standard '61 Sideways Vibrola is a beautiful machine

ABOVE TOP The Standards have Burstbucker 61R (neck) and 61T (bridge) humbucking pickups

ABOVE TOP LEFT The vibrato-equipped SGs feature Orange Drop tone capacitors, whereas the SG Junior has a smaller ceramic cap

ABOVE Inside Gibson's sideways vibrato system – it's unconventional, but its quirks have been recreated faithfully



ABOVE The SG Junior's mahogany body has an attractive 'cathedral' grain pattern

ABOVE TOP RIGHT The 'student model' has simpler tuner buttons

ABOVE RIGHT The Junior's single Dog Ear P-90 and wrapover bridge is a timeless combination that provides a surprising range of tones

In contrast, the Sideways Vibrola adds considerable mass for little or no practical gain. It looks cool, but it's awkward to use and throws the guitar out of tune. You can elect to swing the arm out of the way, but be careful about injuring your picking hand on the sharp corners if you want to switch pickups.

The irony is that here, Gibson has done a stellar job of recreating a piece of equipment that was never very good in the first place!

Although all vibratos are designed to achieve the same effect, it's interesting how the feel of each leads you to approach them in different ways. The Stratocaster's is perhaps the most playable and expressive for soloing, while Bigsbys are often more atmospheric and musical when you're adding vibrato to chords and slurring notes. The Maestro combines elements of both, with the immediacy of the Strat vibrato, but the restricted pitch variation of a Bigsby. Consequently, it excels for fast and fluttering vibrato effects and so long as you can keep your head, a Maestro will keep you in tune.

Of course, the Junior is trem free, but you can get almost as much pitch-shift simply by shaking the neck and when you do this – surprisingly – it stays in tune remarkably well.

KEY FEATURES

SG JUNIOR
PRICE £1,149 (including hard-shell case)
DESCRIPTION Solidbody electric guitar. Made in the USA
BUILD Fijian mahogany body, mahogany set neck with medium C profile, 12" radius rosewood fingerboard with pearl dot inlays and 22 frets
HARDWARE Wrapover bridge, vintage-style white button tuners
ELECTRONICS 1x P-90 Dog Ear pickup, volume, tone
SCALE LENGTH 629mm/24.75"
NECK WIDTH 43mm at nut, 53.3mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 20mm at first fret, 22.5mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 36.4mm at nut, 53mm at bridge
WEIGHT 2.6kg/5.7lb
LEFT HANDERS Yes
FINISH Vintage Cherry
CONTACT Gibson gibson.com

9/10 **Instant tone, fabulous sustain and playability make this a near perfect plug-and-play guitar**

It's time to choose our favourites and, for entirely different reasons, the SG Junior and the Maestro Vibrola Standard are our clear winners here. There's something thrillingly stripped back about the Junior and its neck is the pick of the bunch. But the tonal range, coupled with the expressiveness and tuning stability of the vibrato, keeps drawing us back to the Maestro-equipped Standard '61.

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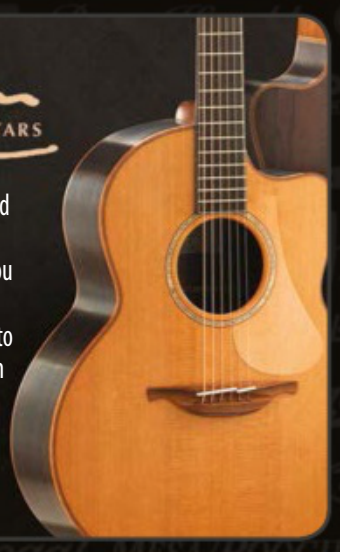

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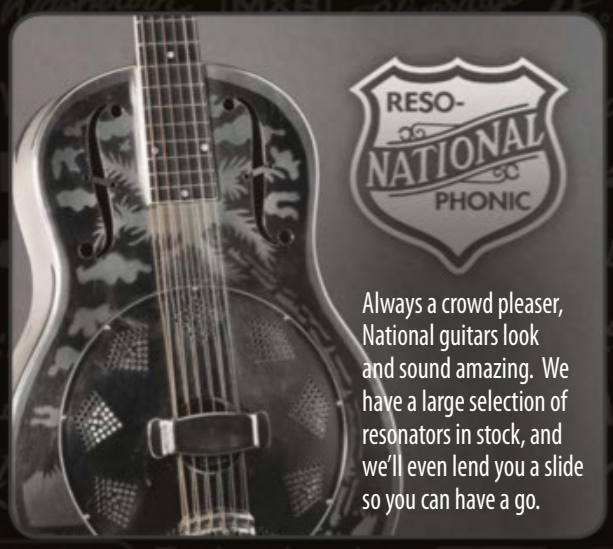

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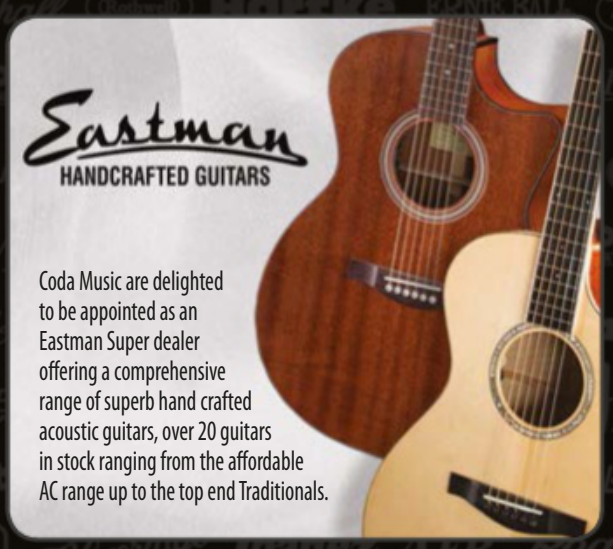
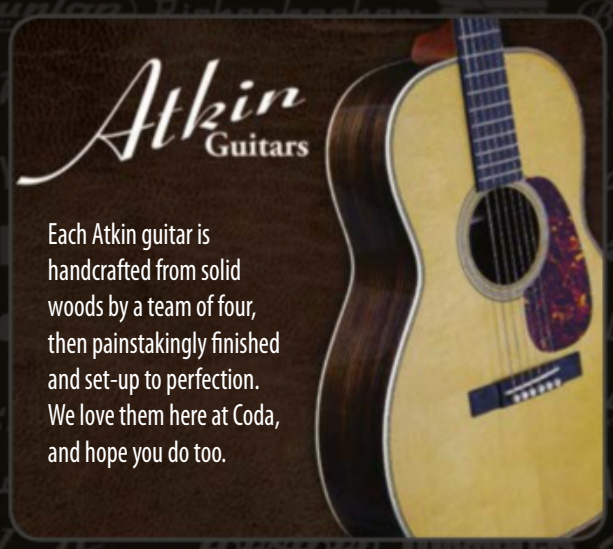


Atkin Guitars

Each Atkin guitar is handcrafted from solid woods by a team of four, then painstakingly finished and set-up to perfection. We love them here at Coda, and hope you do too.



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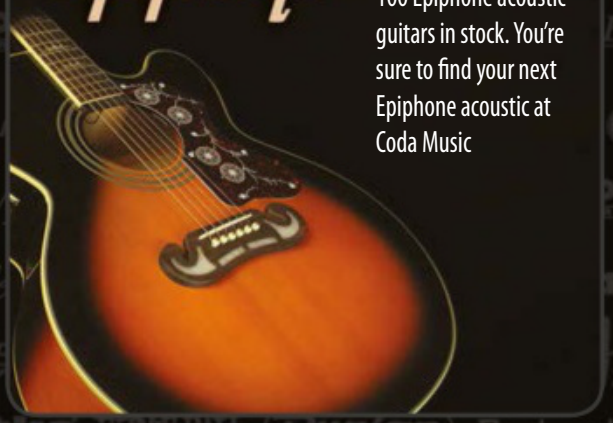

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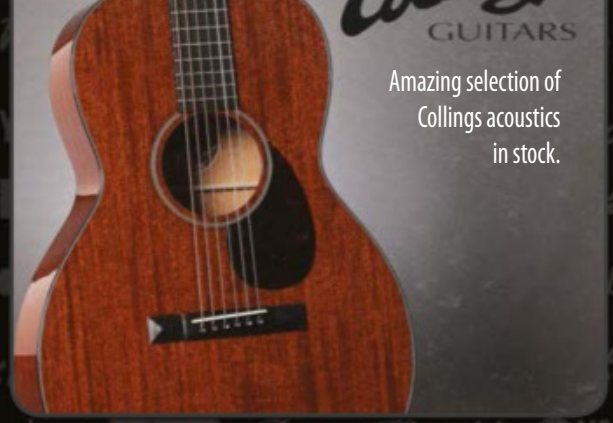

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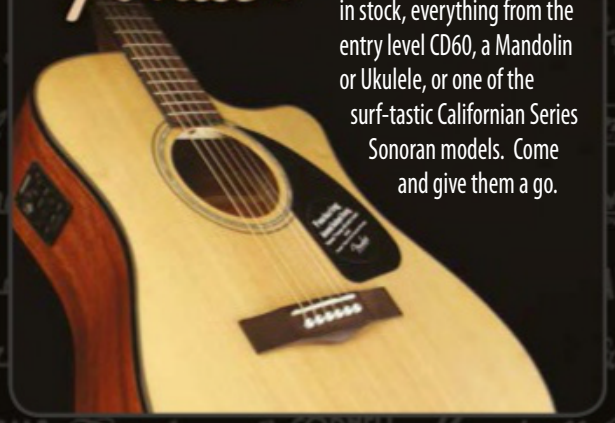
We have a great selection of Fender acoustic instruments in stock, everything from the entry level CD60, a Mandolin or Ukulele, or one of the surf-tastic Californian Series Sonoran models. Come and give them a go.



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SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

THE ORAL HISTORY OF THE GIBSON SG

Although it didn't find favour with the man himself, Gibson's reboot of Les Paul's signature model at the end of 1960 would go on to be the company's best-selling model of all time. Here, we tell the story of the devil-horned solidbody that for many, is the ultimate rock guitar…

WORDS TONY BACON

This is the oral history of the SG, the remarkable solidbody electric that Gibson introduced at the very end of 1960. Gibson intended the SG to be a replacement for the original Les Paul and at first, it too was called a Les Paul. Later confirmed as the SG, it was a radical departure in design, its body a modernistic mix of bevels and points and angles, offering excellent upper-fret access.

In the early 60s, Gibson expanded the SG line to include Standard, Custom, Junior, Special, and TV models, plus a few associated double-necks. They found favour with countless players through the years, including Eric Clapton, George Harrison, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Pete Townshend, Angus Young, Frank Zappa and many more.

The voices here come from interviews conducted for my books about guitars. The people you'll hear from are: Tony Iommi, guitarist with Black Sabbath (1968–2017); Johnny Marr, guitarist with The Smiths (1982–'87); Ted McCarty, president at Gibson (1950–'66); Tony McPhee, guitarist with The Groundhogs (1963–2015); Barry 'The Fish' Melton, guitarist with Country Joe & The Fish (1965–'70); Jimmy Page, guitarist with Led Zeppelin (1968–'80); Les Paul, guitarist (died 2009); and Derek Trucks, guitarist with The Allman Brothers Band (1999–2014) and the Tedeschi Trucks Band (2010–present).

FACING PAGE This 1963 Gibson SG/Les Paul Standard has Les Paul's name on its truss-rod cover and – unusually for that year – has a sideways Vibrola

ORIGIN STORY

Ted McCarty

"Probably eight years after we got started with the Les Paul guitars, must have been the early 60s, Les and Mary Ford started to get a divorce. It became a very nasty, personal divorce. The disc jockeys throughout the entire United States refused to play any of his music. Now, all of a sudden what had been a very popular name and very strong for the sale of the guitars, well… now it was a detriment. And this bothered us, of course.

"When we'd first brought out the Les Paul in '52 and Les started to use it, he was very valuable in those days – he was on television, he was playing in Vegas, very much in the public eye, him and Mary and it was a fine thing as far as we were concerned. Les and I became personal friends.

"But I was a little upset with Les, of course, when they did this sort of thing, the divorce. We kind of drifted apart for a little while. And he got really down as far as popularity. It was the worst thing that ever happened to him in his life, I guess.

"So we didn't want the contract any more – which was a mutual affair – and eventually we dropped

ABOVE An SG on the production line at the Gibson factory in Nashville

FACING PAGE This three-pickup SG/LP Custom was previously owned by Carlos Santana, whose signature is visible on the scratchplate

his name on the guitars. After he got his financial problems and the problems with his wife worked out, we paid him.

"In the meantime, we had the Les Paul Custom, the Les Paul Junior, we had about four or five models. These instruments, each and every one, carried this one-dollar royalty for him – and we were making thousands of them. So we continued to make the guitars and we just called them SGs instead of Les Pauls. We called them SGs, meaning Solid Guitar."

Les Paul

"The contract with Gibson read this way: any instrument made by Gibson that had a pickup on it, whether it's a banjo, no matter what it is, I was to receive my royalty. Yes sir, every instrument made by Gibson, period – a great contract. Now, not only that, they were to send me six of every model. So many came out that I never took the six, I says there's no room for them, just send me one – and sometimes I didn't even take one.

"And then came the divorce with Mary Ford and I. The contract came due in, I think, 1962, right at the time that Mary and I decided to split. Now, Gibson called me and said look, you don't want to sign no contract in the middle of a divorce, we'll wait till the divorce is over, and then we'll re-sign. I agreed as much as they did.

"They were very cooperative with me. Both sides agreed that we would wait until the divorce was over – this had nothing to do with Mary, this was a separate item. We didn't want to sign while that was going on, because her lawyers would ask for part of it in the divorce settlement. If it's over, she's not going to take part of something I no longer am with. So my contract ended in '62, and Gibson could not make any more Les Paul guitars.

"So the SG was a guitar that was made with my name on it and when they sent me the prototype, I said, 'I want you to reinforce the neck of it.' Because you could bend it like a bow and arrow. It was bad. So tighten up on that neck and then you can have my name on it. This was before the divorce, going back to 1960. So they reinforced the neck, and I said, 'Okay, you can put it out.' Next one I got was bad again, and I said, 'Hey, take my name off that guitar until you get it right.'

"The divorce came up: you can no longer make a Les Paul guitar, but they could make the SG. So that's how the SG continued to exist, so that we can get a Les Paul guitar but it won't have the name Les Paul on it. Reason being, I was not happy with that guitar, I didn't like the horns, the cutaway – too sharp. Go up fast, you could injure your wrist. I said this guitar should have been okayed by me, and it wasn't. That stayed in till the divorce and the divorce dragged on for several years."

Gibson flyer, February 1961

"Here's an established favorite, the Les Paul Standard model – now offered with completely new styling… thinner, lighter in weight and custom contoured. A wonderfully designed solid body, perfectly balanced for playing in a standing position. In fact, no matter how you hold your guitar, you'll be comfortable playing the new Les Paul Standard. Beautiful cherry-red finish. Gibson Vibrola and an extra slim, fast, extremely low-action neck make this guitar a joy to play.

"Clear bell-like tone throughout its entire range. Exciting, modern design. Adjustable Tune-o-matic bridge. Twin powerful humbucking pickups with separate tone and volume controls that can be pre-set. Nickel plated metal parts and individual machine heads with deluxe buttons. Deluxe padded leather strap included. Les Paul Standard, Cherry finish, $265.00; Faultless plush-lined case $45.00."

MODDED FOR BLUES

Tony McPhee

"I got my SG Standard from the Selmer shop in Charing Cross Road, central London, in 1962. I chose it because it had a tremolo arm like a Stratocaster, which was my first choice – Hank Marvin had a

Strat and I loved the single-coil sound of its pickups. I also loved the sound of Gretsch guitars and the look of their Jet Firebird. But the SG had the side-action vibrato – I hate the term whammy bar. And the clincher was the position of the pickup selector switch, similar to a Strat's – but not a Goldtop's, which was in the wrong place, ergonomically, as far as I was concerned. And the Goldtop was a heavy guitar.

"I made some changes to my SG through the years. I took off the vibrato cover – I thought of the vibrato like a side-to-side-action Morse-code key, like ultra-fast Morse-code operators used and it didn't cause me any problems.

"I put a capacitor on the volume pots between the slider and output tags, which enhanced the treble. I called it the tone changer and you can hear it on *Mistreated* on the *Blues Obituary* album.

"Also, I put a push-button switch mid-body that put a capacitor across the output, like a tone control – my version of a wah-wah pedal, before I got my first Schaller wah. I'd press it in solos and so on to imitate a wah pedal.

"Later, I had Paul Raven, the Killing Joke bassist, make a TS logo for the pickguard and at one time, I put a Strat pickup between the two humbuckers. Anyway, in 1986 that original SG Standard [serial number 54146] was stolen from a dressing room at a gig in a theatre in Irvine, Scotland. The buggers! Later, around 2006, I bought an SG Special. It had a great action, but I found the neck was too narrow, and Derek Forbes, ex-Simple Minds, has it now. My career is on hold these days after the stroke I suffered in June 2009, which stole my voice and a certain amount of dexterity."

ACCESS AND REACH

Barry 'The Fish' Melton

"Country Joe & The Fish were rehearsing in a little nightclub in Berkeley called the Jabberwock, where we met a family who fell in love with the band. They wanted to buy us all instruments and help the band get started. It turned out that their son had been killed in an automobile accident about a year before, and adopting the band was some way of memorialising their son.

"When they asked me what I would buy if I had the money to buy the guitar I wanted, I chose my first SG, which I think I got at Leo's in downtown Oakland. It wasn't long after I bought my Standard that I had a Bigsby bar attached to it. I wanted that

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ABOVE Tony Iommi is an icon of the SG – and here, he's sporting a lesser-spotted model with Jazz Bass knobs and a Floyd Rose vibrato unit

Bigsby bar because, after all, we were making The New Music.

"The SG has almost two full octaves on the fretboard and you can reach the higher octaves. In fact, I could bend the very last note on the high E string to get to the high E. You could reach it all on the SG. But I don't think I ever really got in tune until the 70s.

"My original SG Standard was stolen back in 1971 and I immediately bought another to replace it. That's the one I've been playing ever since. That's the one you'll see me with, if I can do anything about it. I have spares and it's had at least two neck repairs, up near the head. The neck on the SG is fragile. My guitar-repair guy assures me that the neck is actually stronger in the places where it's been glued than it is in other places."

OLD BOY IS NO GIBSON

Tony Iommi

"I first started using an SG Special on the first Black Sabbath album. I always used to play Fenders and was using a white Strat. I bought the SG as a backup, a second guitar, and I'd never really played it. I hadn't had it that long. We were in the studio doing the album and the pickup went on the Strat. Typical, isn't it? And we only had a day to record the album. So I didn't have a lot of time, and I used the Gibson. And that was it, really. I never sort of went back.

"The first one I had was a right-handed one and I was going to use it upside down. But somebody contacted me, said they'd got a left-handed one, so I met them at some service station or something, and we swapped guitars. That was it: now I had a left-handed one and he had a right-hand one.

"For me, the SG is lighter. I did want a Les Paul, a bit later, probably once we got rolling. I liked the Les Paul, but I could never find a left-handed one in them days. And I've never felt right and comfortable with a Les Paul, it's just too heavy for me and reaching the top frets is harder. The SG, I could reach the top frets – and since I took the end of my fingers off in an accident, that was a bit difficult with a lot of guitars. I like that it's a small body, as well. It's comfortable.

"One of those crazy ideas at the time, I wanted a 24-fret guitar. There were none about. I just thought, 'Oh, that would be good for me.' I used to experiment a lot and wanted to do things, and of course I couldn't actually do them myself.

"I approached a couple of companies and they weren't interested, they said: 'Oh no, nobody's gonna use that.' Around 1970, I met John Birch and I teamed up with him. I actually put money in to run the company and he made me a 24-fret SG, so then I used that.

"John Diggins came to work for John Birch and I took him on the road with me. He used to set my guitars up and stuff. He worked for John for a bit and then he made a guitar for me at home – on his kitchen table. That was my first one from John Diggins.

"The original Old Boy was my old red SG and then John Diggins made me *the* Old Boy, probably around '75, this guitar he made at home, SG-style, 24 frets, cross inlays. That's the one I always used, for many years. I really like that guitar, though I don't really take it on the road now, it's too valuable. I've had a good many years out of that one, and it really is one of my favourite guitars."

SIX AND 12

Jimmy Page

"I got a Gibson double-neck [EDS-1275] to fit in with *Stairway To Heaven*, because there were so many guitar parts. There's acoustic, and 12-string and the solo and I thought I can't do this on only one of those guitars. But I'd seen double-necks before. I'd seen them in country music – Grady Martin, Joe Maphis – and I'd seen one in Family. You remember Family? That guy had a double-neck.

"So anyway, I asked to get one from Gibson, because I knew it was the only way, I knew I couldn't do *Stairway* live… but it was essential to do it. So it became iconic, didn't it? And a little tough on the left

ABOVE The SG is the weapon of choice for slide genius Derek Trucks – and its unparalleled upper-fret access makes it a great choice for lead-orientated players

shoulder, yeah, though I've got heavier guitars. But nevertheless, it was pretty weighty."

Johnny Marr

"A lot of my musical education came from pop records of the early 70s onwards, because that's when I started buying records. Whether they were T.Rex or Cockney Rebel, Sweet, Sparks, they were a synthesiser-free zone, but still quite elaborate. It may be my personal nostalgia, but that was my golden era, from glam rock onwards. Luckily, those records were adorned with lots of multi-layered guitars.

"Much as I was into T.Rex, you'd hear things like *Magic* by Pilot and I remember when they were on *Top Of The Pops*, the guitarist played a double-neck SG [Ian Bairnson on EDS-1275]. I was 10 or 11 and I was fascinated to know what that other neck was doing. He looked immediately twice as proficient as anyone else who'd just been on.

"So it was seeing double-necks that gave me a curiosity about 12-strings – it was a visual cue. I was soaking up information on that pop culture. And I found out that those double-necks sound incredible, because you have all of that body mass. A giant table-top!"

ONE BROTHER TO ANOTHER

Derek Trucks

"When I was kid, I had this photo hanging in my room of Duane Allman with an SG. I was taken with the sound of his instrument, but there was something about the look of that guitar. I think your first hero, seeing that instrument – well, that was the guitar that I wanted as a kid.

"When I first started playing, I'd ask around. A lot of guys I played with had Les Pauls, it was all Les Pauls and Stratocasters, maybe a Tele – you didn't see a lot of SGs. So I think that made it even a little bit more exotic.

"And then, had to be '91, '92, something like that, after a few years of playing, I think my parents saved up, and they took me to this music store in downtown Jacksonville, Paulus Music. They pulled out this brand-new Gibson case. I even remember the smell of the lacquer in the inside of the case. That first new-guitar smell! I think it was a '62 reissue SG Standard.

"From that moment on, the SG was the guitar I always played or always come back to. I've gone through trying to play other instruments, convincing myself that I really like them and then I always fall back to the SG. Even though the SG is kind of an aggressive-looking guitar, there's still, for me, something classic about it.

"And I like the weight of it. I like the way it sings. It almost feels like a hybrid between a Strat and a Les Paul, but it still has that bite. I don't play with a pick often, it's usually just my hands, so there's something about the bark of an SG that I really love.

"I still have that first one. I played it for 10, 15 years. That's the one I've got a boatload of signatures on. I remember we were playing some club, I think Aspen, Colorado, just rowdy clubs that we played all the time… and you leave your guitar on the stand between sets. I remember going back for the second set and picking it up and feeling the strings just loose, and then looking at the headstock. I think somebody had just knocked it off the stand and put it back up. I had it repaired and it was fine, but it was never quite the same. So I ended up moving on to another one at that point and just stashing that thing away.

"And then Galadrielle Allman, Duane Allman's daughter, gave me one of the Dickey Betts 'One Brother To Another' Gibsons, that recreation of the SG that Dickey had given to Duane. They took that guitar and copied it and relic'd it out. So she sent me one of those, an artist proof from that run, and it was the lightest SG I'd ever felt. That one immediately became my everyday guitar. And later still, I did my signature SG with Gibson.

"Now, a Strat seems kind of bulletproof. You can run over it with a car and it'll probably still play just fine. But an SG seems a little more hands-on. You have to really be on it. I like that. I like the ever-changing elements of it." G

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THE GIBSON SG'S GREATEST HITS (THIS LIST GOES TO 11)

Gibson's best-selling electric guitar of all time has been on more hits than you can shake a trident at. From razor-sharp rock to tripped-out jams, the list that follows might just be proof that this iconic devil-horned solidbody has all the best tunes…

WORDS CHRIS VINNICOMBE

© Getty Images

THE WHO
My Generation (Live At Leeds)

Pete Townshend's blend of control and abandon showcases the SG Special's extraordinary range and dynamics in this extended live version of The Who's iconic hymn to teenage angst. Roaring riffs, searing lead and chiming clean textures all feature as part of this sensational electric-guitar masterclass, although here in 2019, smashing vintage Gibsons into splinters isn't necessarily recommended.

THE BEATLES
She Said She Said

Inspired by an acid-fuelled encounter with Peter Fonda at a party in Beverly Hills, Lennon's psychedelic pop masterpiece is one of *Revolver*'s most daring compositional moments. George Harrison's spiralling guitar lines were played on the 1964 SG Standard he used throughout the *Revolver* sessions. The guitar was later sold at a 2004 Christie's auction for $567,000 to Indianapolis Colts owner Jim Irsay.

SISTER ROSETTA THARPE
Up Above My Head

Tharpe's iconic 1960s performance on US television show *TV Gospel Time* is compulsory viewing for guitar fans surfing YouTube. Backed by a gospel choir contributing handclaps, Sister Rosetta's magnetic performance contains plenty of vocal fireworks, before her saintly white SG/Les Paul Custom is given the kind of workout that illustrates why Tharpe is regarded as such a groundbreaking figure in pop history.

CREAM
Sunshine Of Your Love

Clapton's 'Fool' SG is one of the most recognisable guitars of the psychedelic era, both for its hand-painted visuals by Dutch artists Marijke Koger and Simon Posthuma and the 'woman tone' that was a signature of his Cream-era sound. Hear it in its pomp on recordings from Cream's famous Winterland Ballroom show in San Francisco in March 1968.

AC/DC
Back In Black

Angus Young is synonymous with the Gibson SG and among a formidable catalogue of hard-rock riffs, this may be his finest. An ass-shaking blend of power and clarity, this air-guitar anthem has probably sold more SGs and Marshalls than almost any other recording, while the signal boost provided by Young's Schaffer-Vega wireless system added the secret sauce for lead tones.

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND
Statesboro Blues

1971's *At Fillmore East* explodes into life with the unmistakable sound of Duane Allman's searing electric slide guitar, performed on the early 60s SG/Les Paul Standard that sold at auction for a massive $591,000 in July. Although the song was originally recorded by Blind Willie McTell in 1928, it was the Taj Mahal version of *Statesboro Blues* that got Allman into slide playing in the first place – armed with a bottle of Coricidin pills he'd been given by

© Getty Images

his brother Gregg to combat a cold, Duane emptied out the bottle, washed off the label and learned to play the song in its entirety.

BLACK SABBATH
Black Sabbath

Busy inventing heavy metal? No time to get your guitar fixed. Tony Iommi only switched from the white Stratocaster he'd used with Jethro Tull on *The Rolling Stones Rock And Roll Circus* to a Gibson SG Special because one of the Strat's pickups had failed while recording *Wicked World* during the sessions for Sabbath's trailblazing debut. The title track's use of *diabolus in musica* sounds every bit as sinister today as it did nearly half a century ago.

FRANK ZAPPA AND THE MOTHERS
Son Of Orange County

Released in 1974, *Roxy & Elsewhere* comprises music from a series of concerts in Hollywood, Chicago and Edinboro, Pennsylvania. Although the guitar solo on this double 'live' LP is actually edited together from more than one show, it features Zappa's heavily modified SG Special in full idiosyncratic flow. The 'Roxy' SG was recreated by Gibson for a 2013 signature model, complete with uncovered humbuckers, coil split and phase switching.

THE DOORS
Light My Fire

Robby Krieger bought his first SG in a Santa Monica pawn shop because it was the closest thing he could afford to the red Gibson he'd seen Chuck Berry play live, but The Doors' guitarist took the instrument way beyond the boundaries of rock 'n' roll. His band's most famous song is a prime example – recorded straight into a Twin Reverb, *Light My Fire* saw The Doors take inspiration from Bach and John Coltrane.

SANTANA
Soul Sacrifice (Live At Woodstock)

"They told us we weren't going on until eight. So I said, 'Hey, I think I'll take some psychedelics and by the time I'm coming down, it'll be time to go onstage and I'll feel fine.'" At least that's what Carlos Santana thought while prepping for his famous performance at Woodstock in 1969. "I was peaking around two o'clock," he revealed to *Rolling Stone* two decades later. "Somebody said, 'If you don't go right now, you're not gonna go on.'" All things considered, this six-minute wig-out proves that sometimes, the drugs *do* work.

TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND
Midnight In Harlem

The man many guitarists consider to be the world's finest electric slide player is also one of the modern era's prime exponents of the Gibson SG. On the road these days, Derek Trucks' spine-tingling tones are primarily wrung from Gibson Custom Dickey Betts models through Super Reverbs and Alessandro amps, while the vintage-reissue SG he grew up with – retired from live use some years ago following a headstock break – features the signatures of such giants of the blues as BB King and Hubert Sumlin.

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Since the mid-2000s, Foals have remained committed to following their muse and creating interesting and expressive guitar music that still manages to cut through to the mainstream – as their five Top 10 albums and laundry list of award nominations attest. As they prepare to release their second album of 2019, the visceral, bombastic *Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost – Part 2*, we caught up with guitarists Yannis Philippakis and Jimmy Smith to discuss why, in the current climate, their embrace of big rock riffs feels like "an act of defiance"

WORDS JOSH GARDNER **PORTRAITS** ALEX KNOWLES

FOALS

THE GUITAR INTERVIEW

It's safe to say 2019 has been a banner year for Foals. In March, the Oxford four-piece released their fifth album *Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost – Part 1*, which hit No. 2 in the charts and garnered them their third nomination for the Mercury Music Prize. But they're not done with 2019 just yet. October sees the band drop their second album of the year, *Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost – Part 2* and with talk of a 2020 Glastonbury headline slot heating up, it feels like 2019 will be remembered as the moment when the band ascended to the heights their 15-year graft has merited.

Not that guitarists Yannis Philippakis and Jimmy Smith have any plans to scale back the hard work. We catch up with them before a headline show at Moscow's Adrenaline Stadium, at the tail-end of a mammoth world tour to support *Part 1*, which will kick off again once *Part 2* has been released: "Yeah, it's a lot," admits Yannis a little wearily. "We're doing 130 shows, I think?"

But Foals are used to mammoth undertakings – after all, this is a band that came off the touring cycle for 2015's *What Went Down* and decided to make two albums in one go. But that wasn't always the intention… "There wasn't a pre-considered plan," says Yannis. "We just we had quite a bit of time off after *What Went Down* and that ended up in us just having a lot of material that we wanted to work on." Jimmy explains: "The big whiteboard in the studio has always got something like 20 songs on it – and usually that's knocked down to about 12…"

"For a long time, we didn't know whether we would finish all of it, but we were just in a good place creatively," Yannis picks up. "And so we ended up with having this body of work that we felt was too broad to put onto one record, and that it would actually be a far more exciting artistic prospect, and more coherent, to put out two separate records that have that both have their individual characters, but kind of form a larger whole. We were just excited by the ambition and the scope of it."

"IF *EVERYTHING NOT SAVED WILL BE LOST – PART 1* WAS MORE CONTEMPLATIVE AND CONSIDERED, *PART 2* IS MORE AN EXPRESSION OF RAGE AND FRUSTRATION"

LIGHTNING STRIKES TWICE

The decision to split the record up gives each a distinct personality – if the first part is the most atmospheric and expansive record the band have ever produced, while *Part 2* is their heaviest and most visceral. "*Part 1* really set out the themes that we wanted to express and then *Part 2* is a continuation of that journey," Yannis explains. "If *1* was more contemplative and considered, *2* is more an expression of rage and frustration."

The theme that unites the albums has been a recurring one throughout their career – the encroachment of technology on our lives and the impact it has on humanity – but here, it's steeped in cynicism.

"When we were recording *Total Life Forever*, I was really interested in this book, *The Singularity Is Near*, by Ray Kurzweil," Yannis explains. "It's about the technological changes that would propel mankind into this new, perhaps utopian, way of life. And I was kind of ambivalent, but vaguely excited about it, but it has definitely come to a crashing halt!

"The potential of technology is being harnessed by major corporations to just act in ways that are authoritarian and darkly motivated. Technology should be trying to find ways of sorting out our environmental problems, but it just feels like that instead, we're just being sold better and more addictive apps to keep our minds occupied in other ways, rather than engaging with the problems that are pressing… so yeah, I definitely don't feel chirpy about it!"

RIFF MACHINE

Things might be thematically dark, then, but from a musical point of view, *Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost* crams in a broad and exhilarating palette of sounds across its two parts, as befits a band who have a reputation for never resting on their creative laurels.

"I think we get bored really easily. It's just boring to repeat yourself," says Jimmy of the band's restless creative process. "It comes naturally now. Part of the DNA is to keep evolving. And also the periods – like now – when we're on tour, we're listening to loads of different music, individually, will all feed into the next record by the time we get back in a room together."

"I wouldn't necessarily say it's to do with the boredom of staying in one place," Yannis counters. "It's more about the excitement of where the next chapter is. There's a kind of insatiable appetite to try to explore what the five of us are capable of without remaining in the same space.

"I think it's necessary for bands to evolve like that. Redefining yourself is exciting and important – much more so than ever now. If you just stay in one place for too long, you're just kind of condemning yourself."

"It would be rubbish if we tried to do that and everyone was like, 'No, we like the old sound better!' That would be shit!" Jimmy exclaims. "I know that happens to some bands, and you end up being stuck in a pigeon hole and that's that – you can't get out of it."

ARIES ARISE ARIES ARISE ARIES ARISE ARIES

“IT COMES FROM FRUSTRATION, AND FROM THAT FEELING WHEN YOU DIG INTO YOUR INSTRUMENT, AND THE HUMANITY OF THAT. IT ALMOST FEELS LIKE AN ACT OF DEFIANCE”

One of the most striking facets of *Part 2* compared to its ethereal and exploratory predecessor is the ferocity of the riffs that Foals are now bringing to the table. While still undeniably a Foals record, there’s a raw, scuzzy edge to the guitar parts that’s unlike anything they’ve done before.

“All the big ones are him,” Jimmy says of Yannis’ newly explored penchant for towering guitar parts. “He’s like a riff machine!”

“I think it comes from frustration,” Yannis explains of the album’s aggressive edge. “And also just from that feeling when you dig into your instrument, and the humanity of that. It almost feels like an act of defiance these days.

“The more we tour and the more I see other musical acts – everything now is clicked and gridded and run by computer programs… most acts are using Auto-Tune in the front-of-house… and it’s just like, fuck all that! We just want to be able to dig into instruments and create something that’s primal and vital and human and in opposition to the way that music is becoming more and more sterilised, careerist and calculated, you know?

“Even if it’s uncool to be writing rock riffs in 2019 – whatever that means – we’d rather just do that, and for it to feel correct, you know?”

Foals’ constant sonic evolution has also come from an evolution of the relationship between the band’s two guitarists.

“In the early days, we had a very strict idea of what Foals should be – and that was very clean guitars, lots of really tight interplay, everything very staccato,” Yannis reflects. “I would often write both parts a lot of the time and then naturally, that strictness loosened up. Partly so that we could evolve and explore, but also because Jimmy needed space as a writer because he’s just an incredible musician. And the band only got better the more freedom everyone was given.”

“I know how to work really well with Yannis, and the way we play guitar together,” Jimmy adds. “I know where to put stuff and I like the dynamic of him doing the big riffs and me doing the annoying stuff!”

When it came to *Part 2*, that understanding of how to play together saw Jimmy make some sacrifices for the benefit of the whole.

“A lot of my stuff actually got taken off this album,” he explains. “Each of the songs on the new album, I had guitar lines through all of them. And they mostly got stripped out! Not because they were crap or anything, but just because ate up a lot of space. It’s like when you got such a big riffs, you don’t need anything else over the top!

“I definitely lean more on the melancholy side for sure – that floats my boat. Much to some other band members’ concern, I love to inject a bit of sadness into everything… that’s probably why half my guitar parts got taken out! We’ve got this chirpy big riff and I just end up making it really sad!”

TRAVIS PICKER

Go to any of Foals’ incendiary live shows and you’ll be greeted by the sight of Yannis giving uncompromising treatment to one of his trademark Travis Bean electric guitars – the aluminium-necked 70s curio has been an ever-present for the frontman throughout the band’s career and he doesn’t see it stopping any time soon.

“I like the fact that you feel like it’s playing you and not the other way around,” he says of his many Beans. “I like the weight of them and I like the fact that it feels like a commitment – and it doesn’t feel like a toy. It’s something that is crafted. It’s like, what’s the difference between using heavy metal cutlery and plastic? Well, I’d rather use heavy metal cutlery! It feels like that. Not in any kind of cold way, but it is definitely different. And I feel like it’s a potent guitar, y’know? It’s a commitment to play it.

"I like the fact that it's 'other' as well, that it is different and rare. And they come from this particular era when it was viewed as being the next great evolution in guitar making and then, for whatever reason, they were kind of frozen in that time and every time you buy one, you're essentially dipping back into that mindset of guitar playing in the 70s when they were viewed as being this futuristic evolution. So I like the romance around them as well, I guess."

Yannis's path to Bean-love was inspired by one legendary 90s record producer and a big gamble on the unknown…

"I had grown up being fascinated by Steve Albini and so I'd read about these Travis Beans," he recalls. "I was after what was, in my mind, this really pure sound, so that's why I was attracted to the Travis Bean with the Hiwatt.

"And I saved up for the best part of a year to get my first Travis Bean – having never played one! But then it arrived and I just instantly fell in love with it… though I think I'd decided to be in love with it before had even arrived! But since then, I've never really changed it up – I still just play with Beans and Hiwatts live."

When it comes to live playing, Jimmy has always been a staunch Jazzmaster aficionado, but he's recently mixed things up a bit, taking out four custom Fenders sporting the company's meaty Shawbucker humbuckers in place of the classic single coils.

"They're so good to me, Fender – they're almost too good to me!" Jimmy chuckles. "I never get very long with a guitar before they're like, 'Hey take this new one out!' But I feel like these are the ones. Neil Whitcher from Fender was like, 'Do you want to do something cool and unique for this album tour?' and I was like, 'Cool, yeah!'

"I don't remember who had the original idea to use Shawbuckers, I think maybe he suggested it because I wanted something a bit more pokey. I just wanted something a bit more attack-y. But they work really, really well and they feed back a lot more, which is nice – and they're just a bit livelier. And then I got to choose the colours, which is for me the most exciting bit!

"Apparently, when one of these guitars came off the production line in Corona, the guy was like, 'Whoa, what's this!? We should put this into production!' But I like the idea of just having these four guitars of my own that nobody else in the world has got. It's wicked – I want to keep them now, I don't want anything else! I like it when guitars get battered and weathered… mine are too bloody clean! You wouldn't know that they've just done a world tour."

If he likes them a bit battered, we suggest that Fender has become a dab hand at making guitars look that way straight out of the factory… "Yeah, but that's horrible!" he exclaims. "That's so lame, that's even worse! I'll just keep my clean guitar… I'm not going to get them road worn!"

When it came to recording in the studio, both guitarists were free to experiment a little more with Jimmy using a vintage Telecaster, ES-335 and Les Paul Custom, with a Jazz Chorus, Fender Twin and Yannis's Selmer head providing the oomph for both. Yannis mainly used one of his Beans – a 1000 Artist – and a guitar that had a nose for good tone…

"I used a 1967 Gretsch Country Gent, which I picked up in Cincinnati, largely based on its smell!" he laughs. "It was a proper ponger! We were in some musty old shop and I was just absolutely bowled over by its odour! And so I just had to take it home."

EFFECTS PHILES

Pedals have always been the cornerstone of the Foals sound and it's no surprise that the sonic experimentation evident on both parts of *Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost* necessitated some pretty hefty pedalboard use.

"With us, the standard operating procedure is Boss," Jimmy says. "The RV-5 reverb pedal and the DD-3 delay – the fuzz pedals that we use are by Fuzzrocious and there's the POG – that's like our most basic setup. We could do anything with that kind of thing. Oh, and the green Line 6 delay pedal – the DL4 – if I had a gun to my head, I would have to pick that as my favourite guitar pedal of all time."

"For me, I really like the Audio Kitchen Big Trees pedal for overdrive," adds Yannis. "I use that both live and in the studio, just to have that natural drive. And

I also just like to crank preamps up into the mixing desk. I used the Chandler Germanium Pre Amp and we were just cranking that until it broke up.

"But I'll leave the pedals to Jimmy, 'cause he went on this huge pedal shopping spree! So he can talk a lot about that!"

ECHO CHAMBERS

"I got into the EarthQuaker Devices pedals a lot," Jimmy begins, accepting the challenge. "I use the Rainbow Machine pedal a lot live and it's a bit bonkers, but you can get some pretty insane one-off sounds out of it… but good luck trying to recall any of it, there's no save button on that thing!

"And the Interstellar Orbiter as well… We love using filter effects – it's really useful for making two guitars that are essentially doing the same thing sound really different.

"There's this delay pedal called the Echosex…" he continues, clearly cringing. "Awful, AWFUL name. It's so bad that I actually had to put a bit of gaffa tape over the 'sex' bit so it just says 'Echo 2', it just pissed me off so much, but it's an amazing replica of a Binson drum thing.

"And Space Echoes are invaluable to us," he adds. "I know they're getting quite expensive now, but if anyone should buy one thing, it's that. Actually the Echosex thing – god I hate that I have to keep saying it – is actually pretty fucking close to the Space Echo. It's got a knob on that does tape warp, and it's a very warm analogue sound."

"I FEEL A LOT OF THE LIFEBLOOD OF CREATIVITY IS DEPENDENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OBJECT I'M USING – WHETHER IT'S A PEDAL, OR A GUITAR, OR A KEYBOARD"

Love of analogue sounds might not be the first thing you'd expect from a band that made their bones with crystalline delay and reverb, but Jimmy reveals that they've moved on from the high-end digital processors.

"Obviously, we've got all the Strymon things, but we're trying to get away from that sound now," he confirms. "That Crystallizer thing seemed to be all over every single record once the blueSky came out! Also, they're just too complicated for me, to be honest. I like pedals to be simple. Take the DD-3 – it's badass, and you can do so much with it… and it's so simple. But then on one of my pedalboards there's a DD-7 and I'm like, 'What the fuck is this?!' They made it too complicated! I mean, you need a degree to use Chase Bliss's pedals!"

"That's what I meant earlier about about digging in and having that connection," Yannis adds. "I feel like a lot of the lifeblood of creativity is dependent on the actual relationship with the object I'm using – whether it's a pedal, or it's a guitar, or a keyboard. I think it's to do with the fact that the primitive feeling of hitting a button or of just using your hand in a percussive way is important.

"I don't like plotting something out in a computer grid and then just hearing it back. I just feel like there's something missing for me there. And it's the same with stompboxes, it's the same with being able to turn up an amp and feeling the physical volume of it hit you – I think all of that stuff is important. Maybe that is just because of the era that we grew up in, but for me it's not the same without it."

"It brings up a lot of problems when you're trying to recreate an album live!" Jimmy chuckles. "Because you might have a sequence of like 10 pedals that you can't remember the order… But it's just the simple fact that it's more fun – being on your knees on the studio floor playing with sounds with your own hands rather than watching someone doing it with a mouse.

"There's something nice about like going into our storage unit or into the studio and seeing all the different types of pedals on top of each other – the different colours, different knobs, designs… it's just nice, isn't it? Pedals are fucking cool!"

SOLE SURVIVORS

As their fellow Mercury nominees The 1975, Idles, Anna Calvi, Fontaines D.C. and Black Midi demonstrate, UK guitar music is clearly in a wonderful and diverse place in 2019, but this wasn't always the case. Foals have endured through a barren period at the turn of the decade when obituaries on 'the guitar band' were being written left, right and centre.

"I actually think around *Holy Fir*e was the moment," Yannis recalls. "It seemed like it only felt like was just us and the Arctic Monkeys out there!"

"It's fucking weird now!" exclaims Jimmy. "We were hanging out with The Murder Capital the other day, and it's like we're their fucking grandads! It's weird because they sort of look at us like we're survivors, but it's kinda cool, y'know? It feels nice!"

"I think it definitely makes us feel that we have something to say, you know? And that there's some enduring worth in what we're doing," Yannis adds. "It's also just cool to see how many great bands are coming out of the UK at the moment, and how fresh it feels. It feels like it's really resonated with the culture and it's cool to be still a part of that."

***Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost – Part 2* will be released on 18 October 2019 on Warner Records**

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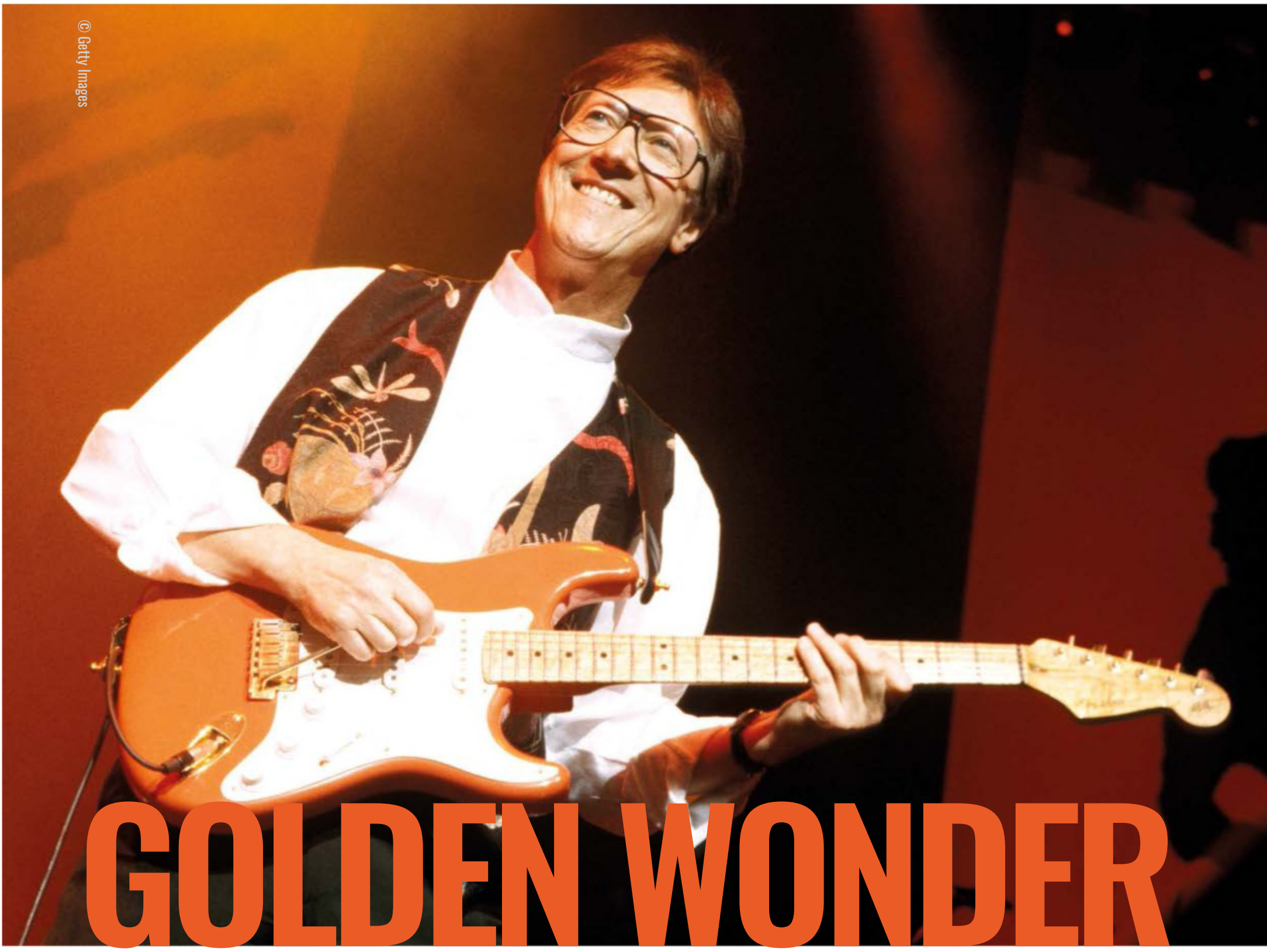

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GOLDEN WONDER

Shadows legend Hank Marvin has been a Strat-toting inspiration for generations of guitar players from all over the globe. Now, as he unveils a brand new retrospective on his 50-year solo career, we chat to Hank about Strats, collaborations and whether this really is his final album…

WORDS PAUL BALMER

Without Hank Marvin, the electric guitar might have ended up in a very different place. The Shadows guitar player's lyrical playing style and revolutionary gear choices not only became hugely influential on instrumental music in general, but also on successive generations of British pop and rock guitarists that came after him – not least George Harrison, Eric Clapton, Brian May and Mark Knopfler.

Hank might now be 77 years old, but after 60 years in the business, the now Australian-based Strat-slinger still has a passion for the guitar, which is reflected on *Gold* – a new compilation album that celebrates 50 years of Hank's solo career.

Assembled by Hank and his team and revisiting collaborations with everyone from May and Knopfler to Vic Flick and Duane Eddy, it's a love letter to the golden era of rock 'n' roll. What better excuse, then, to get Hank to look back on his life in music…

"When I started listening to early rock 'n' roll records in the late 50s, we heard some amazing records coming out of the USA," Hank tells us, reflecting on what inspired him when he first picked up a guitar all those years ago at the age of 16.

"Scotty Moore with Elvis, Cliff Gallup with Gene Vincent, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, James Burton with Ricky Nelson; all those kind of guitar sounds. Particularly, there was a record called *The Fool* by Sanford Clark with a great guitar riff. I sort of plagiarised that to a degree to come up with a song that Jet Harris and myself wrote for Cliff Richard called *She's Gone*."

As the driving force of The Shadows, Hank backed up Cliff for a decade until the group disbanded for two years in 1968, at which point he released his debut solo album. "Peter Gormley, who was then our manager, suggested that I record my first solo album, and our producer Norrie Paramor was very happy," Hank recalls. "Nick Ingman did some arrangements, including one number that was very important to me; *Sacha*. It was a huge hit in Australia in 1969 at a time when I couldn't get arrested in the UK!"

While the single didn't win over record buyers in the UK, the album itself at least troubled the charts, reaching No. 14 in 1969. Despite this, however, there is one thing about that first solo record that he'd do differently given another go around.

"You know, I have one regret about that album," he affirms. "I was probably consciously trying to get away from what had been known as 'my sound' and on reflection, I wish I had sort of stayed with that original sort of echoey sound. But I didn't! And you know these things happen at different periods. But hey, that was the way it was at the time, so I mean I don't lose any sleep over it!"

SWINGING 60S

Hank rose to prominence in what was arguably the most thrilling and creative period in the history of British guitar music and reflecting on that glorious decade, he can appreciate in hindsight what a special time it was.

"The 60s were very exciting as a guitarist," he admits. "You know, I just loved the first Bluesbreakers album – I just thought, 'Wow, this is great!' When I was 14, I was listening to a lot of 'folk blues', which was acoustic – harmonica and acoustic guitar – but I didn't really hear any of the electric blues stuff. I think I had heard Little Walter's *My Babe* and we used to do that sometimes with Cliff.

"But The Bluesbreakers… I loved the heavier guitar sounds! And I found it very exciting when Hendrix came on the scene later – obviously, he had a different approach to it! And bands like Fleetwood Mac with Peter Green – some listeners thought that *Albatross* was The Shadows! I still think it's wonderful, a beautiful, classy record, atmospheric and soothing – really good. And then Eric Clapton came on with that heavy overdrive sound…

"I've used overdrive sounds on some of my albums and straight away, it's like a different instrument. Immediately, you start playing differently because you have sustain, for a start! You can hit a target note and hang onto it with much more impact than you can get with a clean sound. So I found that exciting, a wonderful period."

GOLDEN GREATS

When putting together the tracklisting for *Gold*, Hank was keen to reflect the gamut of his long and varied career in a way that didn't put too much onus on one period or another. "I tried to balance everything, didn't want to lump too many new things together, mixing the vocal and instrumental tracks," he explains. "I'd started out as part of a vocal group based on The Crickets and The Everlys, but in 1959, Jerry Lordan played The Shadows *Apache* and we loved it, recorded it and it was released and suddenly we were primarily an instrumental band, which was no problem." Vocals were a later addition and something Hank didn't necessarily feel that comfortable with; until he received a ringing endorsement from a musical icon…

"In 1965, we had a hit with a song called *Don't Make My Baby Blue* and George Harrison accosted me at Abbey Road… he was always asking me for money, you know!" he jokes. "So he said: 'Hey Hank, I love the new record, you really should continue and do more vocals – forget the instrumentals." He was correct, of course and we've since recorded vocals on several albums. In 1975, we even came second in The Eurovision Song Contest with *Let Me Be The One* – despite forgetting the words on the live relay!"

As well as inspiring a generation of guitar players, the 70s also gave Hank the chance to collaborate with other guitarists in a new way, something else he's keen to celebrate on *Gold*. "I wanted to try a *50 Guitars Of Tommy Garrett* thing [a series of instrumental albums, featuring the cream of America's session guitarists – Ed]," Hank reflects. "I'd always had this idea in the back of my mind that it would be very interesting to do something along those lines as a 'guitar orchestra'. And then the opportunity arose with The Hank Marvin Guitar Syndicate – Alan Parker, Vic Flick, Kevin Peek on guitars and Clem Cattini on drums from The Tornados. They were all very, very cooperative – *Syndicated* and *Bird Of Beauty* make it to the new album."

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Hank might be closely associated with his hugely influential guitar style, but over the decades,

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BELOW The Shadows backstage at the turn of the 1960s (l to r): Jet Harris, Hank Marvin, Bruce Welch and Tony Meehan

© Getty Images

ABOVE Hank tears it up with Cliff Richard And The Shadows at Ahoy in Rotterdam in 2009

he's embraced a wide variety of genres, not least Gypsy jazz.

"I've listened to so many different influences in music," he affirms. "I listened to some straight-ahead jazz at times and recently, a lot of gypsy jazz-style players and jazz-fusion players. Then there's also Cuban and Afro-Cuban music – I've always liked the idea of putting that together with lots of Gypsy jazz.

"In a similar way, *Windmills Of Your Mind* – originally from *Marvin At The Movies* [2000] – is interesting. It's played on a custom Taylor, as I didn't have a Gypsy jazz guitar at that time. I'd been listening to some Gypsy jazz, some Django and The Rosenbergs and I thought, 'Well, maybe it would be interesting to try to do it in that style.'"

Another enjoyable facet of the *Gold* process for Hank has been the chance to revisit some of his favourite collaborations – and the tracks *Wonderful Land* and *Nivram*, which he did with Dire Straits legend Mark Knopfler, are real stand-outs for Hank.

"Mark was an easy guy to work with," Hank recalls. "We've met a few times over the years and I've been to see the Dire Straits shows. I found out Mark was a bit of a fan when he said in a magazine that one of his favourite tracks was *Atlantis* and that it was the best guitar sound he'd ever heard in his life! Eventually, he asked me to guest live on *Local Hero*… and that's all I did! Came on at the end, got all the applause!

Brian May was another guitarist whose bombastic style caught Hank's ear and the pair's instrumental take on Queen classic *We Are The Champions* is a guitar highlight of *Gold*.

"We thought *We Are The Champions* would be an ideal vehicle for us, because a lot of guitar work on that, I pretty much play the melody and he can do all the lovely guitar things that go around that," Hank recalls. "He was very happy to do it and he is a lovely guy to work with. Incredibly loud in the studio! I mean, my goodness, I've never heard anyone have the monitors so loud – like the 70s, when everyone was doing that! He kept saying: 'Can we have it a bit louder, please?' But he did a lovely job.

"He let me have a go on his Red Special guitar, which was nice. I was quite surprised by the shorter scale and also very light strings, so it's really easy to get the strings moving and he does a lot of legato work in the left hand; hammering on and pulling off. So it was a very enjoyable experience. We've subsequently met a few times in Perth and spent a bit of time together. A lovely guy."

ROOTS MANOEUVRES

Two of the compilation's collaborations also gave Hank a chance to go back to his roots, both sonically and personally, and he has happy memories of working with Duane Eddy and his former Shadows frontman Sir Cliff Richard.

"Working with Duane Eddy kind of takes you right back to those big guitar hits from the 1950s," he enthuses. "I remember for *Rebel Rouser*, we'd already laid down the track for *Pipeline* and I'd done the high lines, which originally were done on organ. I was going to put the low guitar on myself and was deciding how to approach it, then Duane came out to Brian Bennett's studio in the UK and just did his business with the track!

"With Cliff Richard tracks, a lot of them just fall together. I simply had to do *Move It* when I did the *Cliff* album, but I wanted to do it differently to the original. So we came up with an arrangement and we had a second verse that wasn't in the original. We thought, 'Hey, maybe Cliff would like to sing this?'

"Cliff was quite happy that he had another verse to sing, as he said he got fed up with singing the one verse! Cliff's always been good like that – he just comes along and enjoys it. I tell you, he loves doing his backing vocals and all those harmony lines gave him a big kick."

Doing a triple-album retrospective does have an air of finality about things, so as we end our chat, we can't help but wonder whether this may prove to be Hank's final album. Yet the man himself sees it more as the closing of a very long chapter.

"I don't know, I've never thought specifically in terms of 'this is the last thing I'll ever do'," Hank admits. "You never know what tomorrow brings. We're just mixing a Gypsy jazz album, but it's obviously not 'Stratocaster' music. So… you never know!" G

***Gold* by Hank Marvin is out now on Crimson**

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SMALL-TOWN BLUES

His debut album was produced by Dave Cobb and he counts *Aquaman* and *Game Of Thrones* star Jason Momoa among his rapidly expanding fanbase. Meet Ian Noe, one of Americana's most compelling new voices…

WORDS CHRIS VINNICOMBE **PHOTOGRAPHY** ELEANOR JANE

ABOVE Ian Noe's album *Between The Country* showcases his emotive voice and superb ensemble playing from some of Nashville's finest musicians

FACING PAGE This Martin HD-28 is Noe's main acoustic

You can hear a pin drop. 4,000 miles from his native Kentucky, Ian Noe's intimate acoustic performance under red neon and fairy lights holds the audience spellbound – until, that is, the closing bars of each song are met with unusually raucous applause at London music venue The Slaughtered Lamb.

The 29-year-old singer-songwriter isn't one to waste words. But what he does say during the gaps between his songs reveals a sense of humour as dry as the Dust Bowl sonics of the Dave Cobb-produced debut album he released earlier this year. Over the course of 37 minutes, *Between The Country* sees Noe populate a small-town landscape with an ill-starred cast of characters vivid enough for the listener to reach through the speakers and touch. If there's been a better Americana record released in 2019, we haven't heard it.

Rewind the tape to late July and we're in East Nashville. The sun is low in the sky, but the air is still heavy as we sit down with Noe in the garden of The Bomb Shelter recording studio. The bijou facility is a treasure trove of analogue gear and has previously hosted the likes of Alabama Shakes and Phosphorescent. Although *Between The Country* came out less than two months ago, Ian is demoing new material already. But in the beginning, there was Chuck.

"Chuck Berry was the first person I was ever obsessed with and wanted to be like," Noe reveals. "That went on for years, from the age of five or six to… well, still. My grandfather played that music a lot. All the time, along with Buddy Holly. I'm a big Buddy Holly fan. It was those two, mainly."

Despite the influence of rock 'n' roll trailblazers, it was through acoustic-driven music that Noe found his voice. "It didn't take me too long to figure out that I wasn't Chuck Berry! But I listened to Neil Young, Bob Dylan and all that stuff. I didn't get heavy into that stuff until I was maybe 12, or something. But I dove into all that stuff and fell in love with it.

"The first song I ever learned was *Wildwood Flower*. I played that song over and over again. But it wasn't until I heard John Prine's *Hello In There* that the fingerpicking came into play. I listened to him – he has so many great songs with fingerpicking – and that's where the obsession came from. Strumming kind of suffered a little bit!"

John Prine is an artist with whom Noe draws frequent parallels and Noe is set to support Prine –

his biggest musical influence – on tour in the coming months. Like the legendary country folk singer, when it comes to acoustic guitars, Noe finds that all roads lead to Nazareth.

"I started out on a Sigma," he recalls, "but I dropped it and broke one of the keys and my dad ended up giving it away to a friend of his. His son was going to try to learn to play it and I think it's still sitting in his basement to this day! But I ended up getting a Martin after that, just a Martin DM, that I still have. I still play it, but it's not the main one now; that's an HD-28."

MUSIC CITY

In a town in which you can flick a flatpick and hit five guitarists – and even your Uber driver has probably won a couple of Grammys – it can be hard to stand out. But a performance at Nashville's Mercy Lounge proved to be a pivotal moment in Ian Noe's career.

Dave Cobb – a six-time Grammy winner who has produced stellar albums for the likes of Sturgill Simpson, Jason Isbell, Brandi Carlile and Rival Sons, among many others – saw Noe open for Canadian singer Colter Wall and immediately wanted to work with him.

The Kentucky songwriter sent Cobb some rough demos. Soon, the in-demand roots producer put together a small ensemble of experienced session players to flesh out Noe's arrangements inside the hallowed walls of RCA Studio A. In addition to Adam Gardner (bass and keyboards), Chris Powell (drums and percussion) and Savannah Conley (backing vocals), Cobb added some memorable electric guitar lines during the album sessions. "He's a great guitar player," Ian enthuses.

We wonder how it felt to hear material he'd written as stark solo acoustic compositions take on a new identity, but Noe says he always imagined these songs with additional instrumentation and he enjoyed recording them with the band. "It was exciting, so it felt good right away," he says. "It wasn't nerve-wracking or anything like that; they are great players, so it was really easy. Dave didn't fool around much with the main structure of the songs. He made it really, really comfortable. It was a very comfortable environment. Like any producer he has opinions and we'd try this and that, but all in all, it was a comfortable experience."

As you might imagine, some of the best hired guns in Nashville don't require much direction. "It was pretty natural, they kind of just fell right into it. There wasn't a lot of 'you do this' and 'you do that'. We just sat around in a circle and I would play one of my songs and we would just knock it out. I don't think we did more than four takes on any one song. Guys like that can hear a song and know what to put in and take away."

"THE STORYTELLING PART IS WHAT I ENJOY THE MOST – YOU JUST HAVE TO MAKE THE WORDS AS SOLID AS YOU CAN MAKE 'EM, 'CAUSE ONCE IT'S OUT THERE, IT'S OUT THERE"

BLACK GOLD

Although evocative storytelling is central to Ian Noe's writing, like many songwriters, the melody usually comes first. "I'm a melody person, singing whatever comes to mind," he admits. "And you can listen back and it'll be nonsense that you were singing, but you might hear something in it that reminds you of something. I like to get a good solid melody and start from there, and see how that melody feels.

"Getting an idea is the best part. Once you get the idea of whatever song you're working on, then you can see it. You can see who you are writing about or what you are writing about. What time of day it is, what it looks like. Then you work on it for a little while and set it down, listen to it the next day and see if you feel the same way about it.

"The storytelling part is what I enjoy the most – you just have to make the words as solid as you can make 'em, 'cause once it's out there, it's out there."

With three years of working long shifts in the oilfields of East Kentucky on his résumé, you might expect Ian to view his new career in music as an escape route, but as he tells us about this chapter of his past, he seems to have a genuine fondness for his time in heavy industry.

"Aside from what I'm doing now, that was the best job I ever had," he smiles. "It was great, I stayed in good shape, ran a lot of different equipment and that type of stuff. It was good."

Perhaps the old adage is true – you can take the boy out of the small town, but you can't take the small town out of the boy. Noe says he doesn't think making records in Nashville and touring the world will impact the visceral subject matter of his songs too much.

"The stuff that I like to write about – growing up in Eastern Kentucky all my life – the well is pretty deep as far as inspiration goes."

If *Between The Country* is anything to go by, it won't run dry any time soon.

Between The Country **by Ian Noe is out now on National Treasury Recordings. Visit iannoe.com for more information and tour dates**

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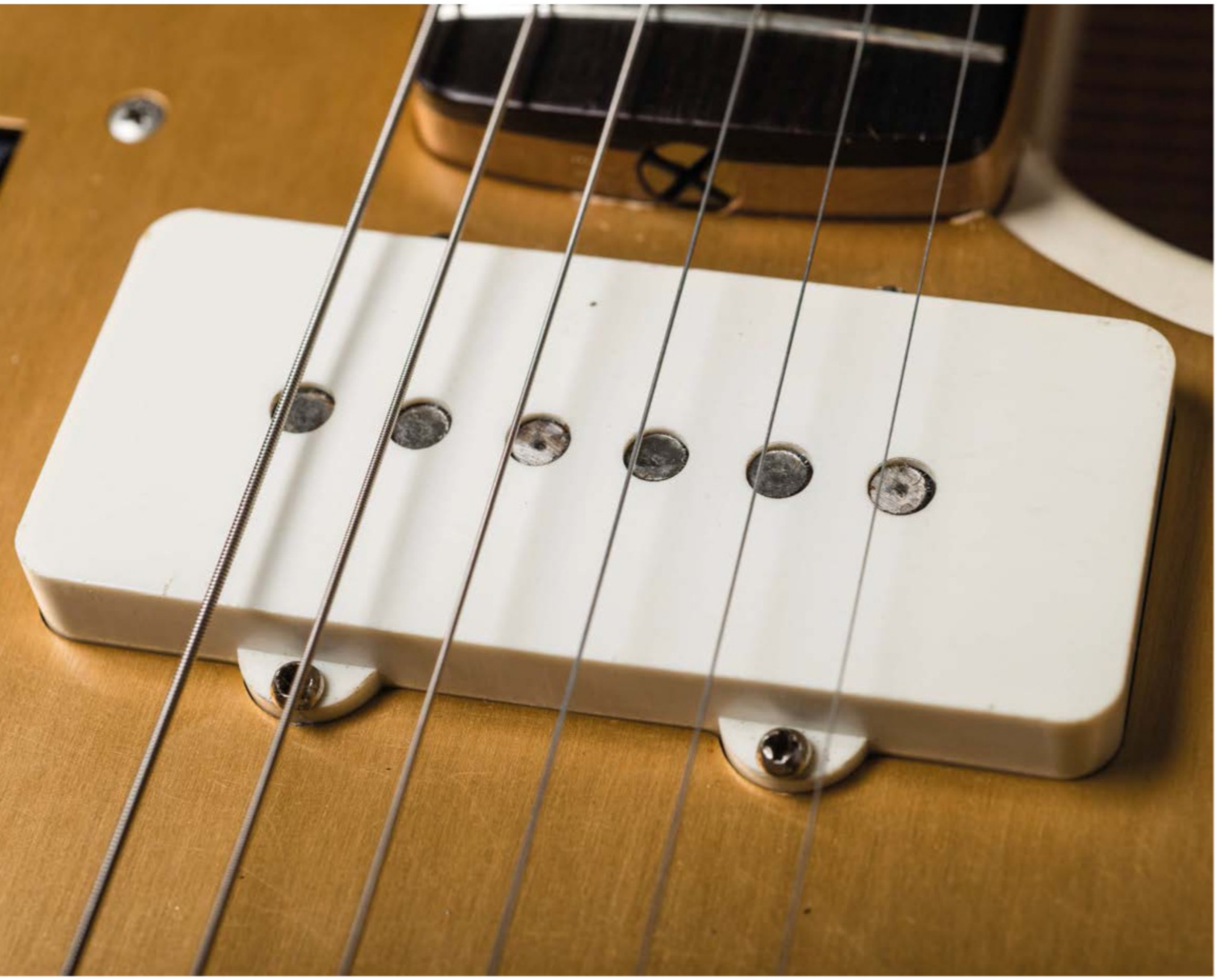
BLONDE AMBITION

This ash-bodied 1959 Jazzmaster sports a gold anodised pickguard and a blonde finish, making it one of the rarest and most collectible offsets in the Fender canon. Although the guitar's price tag places it firmly in the wheelhouse of collectors and rockstars only, we wonder about the impact that ash has on vintage Jazzmaster tone…

WORDS HUW PRICE

ABOVE The practical benefit of an anodised pickguard is that it won't shrink over time and make it impossible to set the pickup heights

OPPOSITE, NEAR TOP The pencil date at the end of the neck reads February 1959

OPPOSITE, NEAR BOTTOM The factory shim is still present in the neck pocket

OPPOSITE, FAR TOP The headstock is almost perfectly preserved

OPPOSITE, FAR BOTTOM Despite the superb condition, buckle rash shows that the guitar has been played. The ash grain is clearly visible

Had Fender approached Mary Kaye a couple of years later than it did, the most sought-after 1950s Fenders of all may have looked something like this. In fact, this guitar is probably just about as rare and collectible as Jazzmasters get – and it's only the very earliest 1958 examples with black pickup covers and metal knobs that might trump it.

It's still a very early one, as evidenced by the gold anodised pickguard. Leo Fender was obviously keen on the idea, no doubt as a method for reducing the interference that plagued his preferred single-coil pickup designs.

He tried it first on Stratocasters, then Precision Basses and the Duo-Sonic and Musicmaster before the earliest Jazzmasters. The issue with Fender's gold anodised guards is that the outer layer is only a few microns thick and soon wears through to the silvery aluminium beneath. It's the same sort of premature ageing that prompted Fender to switch to rosewood fingerboards during the same period.

Although it was only used for a year or so, the aluminium pickguard itself doesn't make this guitar especially rare. But the blonde paint-job certainly does and the finish corresponds with a feature that's even rarer for Jazzmasters – an ash body. It's such a stunning look and quite something to behold in the flesh.

The lacquer has a semi-opaque off-white colour that's sprayed heavier around the edges and the sides, much like a 'one tone' 'burst. By maintaining a thinner finish in the centre, the ash grain comes through, with a distinctive bluish tint that some have likened to blue-veined cheese, although it's much more visually appealing than that description sounds. You also see this effect on late-50s Teles, Esquires and 'Mary Kaye' Strats. It's particularly visible on the back and as far as we can tell, this guitar has a one-piece body.

Besides a small area of buckle rash along the edge of the belly contour at the back of the body, the paintwork is in incredible shape. We love how it's gassed off to a vanishing thinness and sunk down into the grain. Players who aren't vintage-guitar enthusiasts would probably ask for a refund if a luthier returned a freshly sprayed body that looked like this, but there are those of us who are would probably pay a significant premium for it!

The neck's finish is in even better condition than the body's. The clear lacquer has retained its pale,

factory-fresh look, which means that the side dots are easy to see. A friend of ours who owns a few well-worn vintage Fenders had never even noticed that they had side dots, so it's no small thing!

ON GUARD

One of the advantages of anodised pickguards is that they don't shrink. It's quite common for celluloid pickguards to shrink so much that they clamp the pickup covers and prevent you from adjusting the pickup height. With this guitar, you'll have no difficulties setting the pickups exactly as you want them. Commensurate with the rest of the guitar, the plastics are clean, shiny and unworn. There is some verdigris in the knob lettering, but we feel that enhances rather than detracts from the look. The amber switch tip contrasts, but also tones with the overall look.

Clearly, this guitar has been played – but not that much when you consider its age. This means the dark Brazilian rosewood fingerboard is as fresh looking as the back of the neck and the original frets are almost completely unworn. You can still see the sanding lines on the clay dots and rosewood from when the 'board was radiused.

Fender
JAZZMASTER
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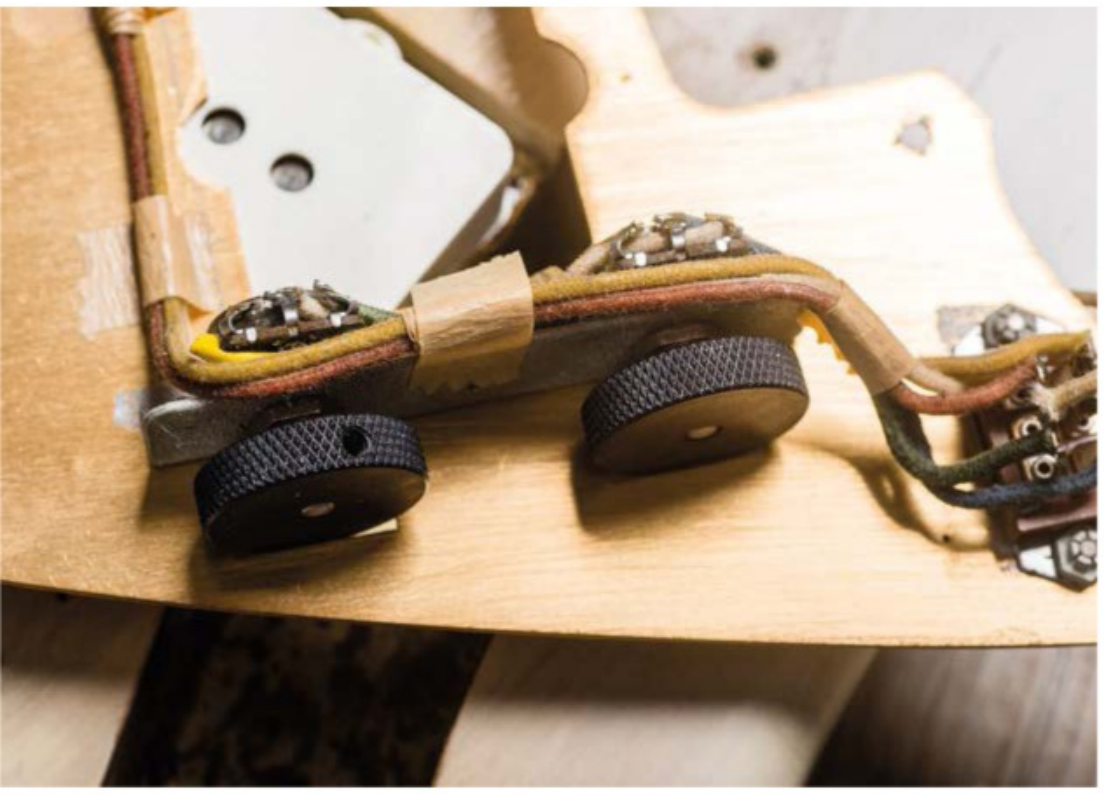

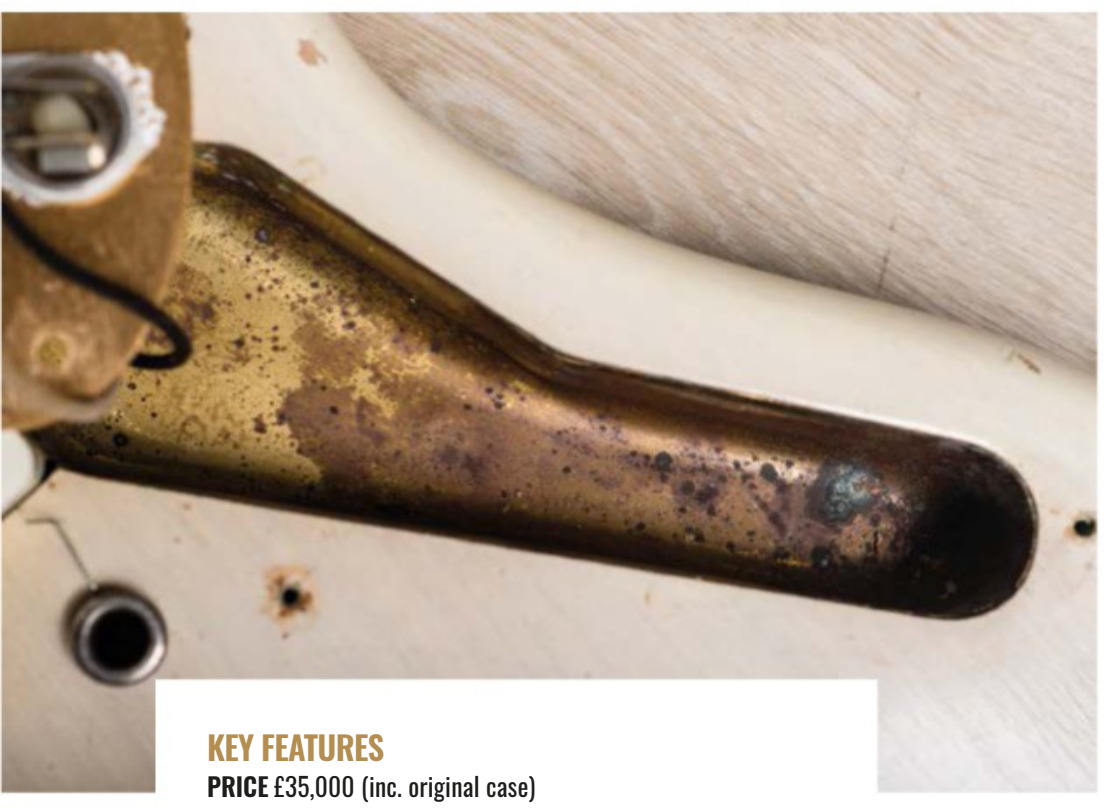

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £35,000 (inc. original case)
DESCRIPTION Solidbody electric guitar. Made in the USA
BUILD Solid ash offset body, bolt-on maple neck with Brazilian rosewood slab fingerboard
HARDWARE Vibrato tailpiece with 6-saddle bridge, Kluson single-line tuners
ELECTRICS Two single-coil pickups, master volume and tone, 3-way pickup selector switch, separate rhythm circuit with volume and tone
SCALE LENGTH 647mm/25.5"
NECK WIDTH 42.4mm at nut, 51.6mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 19.5mm at first fret, 23.5mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 34.6mm at nut, 55.1mm at bridge
WEIGHT 3.97kg/8.75lb
FINISH Translucent Blonde
CONTACT ATB Guitars
atbguitars.com

IN USE

The acoustic tone is even better than expected and further discredits the theory that immaculate vintage guitars are always the least impressive. Compared to an alder-bodied Jazzmaster of much the same vintage, this blondie sounds louder, brighter and a lot clearer. We also hear longer sustain and detect far more harmonic overtones.

It could be argued that it's some distance from the vintage and reissue Jazzmaster tone that many of us carry in our heads. Furthermore, if you like the darker toned, sustain-challenged woody thunk that typifies many Jazzmasters, you might not appreciate this guitar. But if you're more partial to Stratocasters and Telecasters, you may prefer the blondie's combination of ingredients.

It's worth mentioning the neck profile: here, the ash and alder examples are near identical. We tend to associate Stratocaster necks hailing from this era with a flatter 'D' shape, but the shoulders on the Jazzmaster are significantly softer and this results in the whole thing feels extraordinarily comfortable and easy to play.

As we hoped, the acoustic characteristics we like so much are captured and enhanced by the pickups. The bridge has a hint of quack and a lot of wiry twang – much like a brighter-than-usual early 50s P-90, but minus the aggression.

The neck setting is equally bright, if not a tad brighter, but it's also rounder, fuller and a whole lot sweeter. No wonder Leo Fender imagined jazz players flocking to this model and bringing the serious muso credibility he so wanted.

But to our ears, the middle setting is where this guitar really comes alive. With the hint of phasey

ABOVE, TOP LEFT Fender's wiring was always very cleanly executed and the original masking tape binding the wires still survives

ABOVE, BOTTOM LEFT Fender lined Jazzmaster control cavities with brass sheeting to try to reduce noise

ABOVE The knobs feature the original gold paint, which displays vivid verdigris

ABOVE The 60-year-old headstock decal is remarkably well preserved, with only two small areas missing

TOP RIGHT The fingerboard has so little wear, sanding lines can still be seen on the rosewood and the clay dot inlays

BOTTOM RIGHT The controls include a full complement of original potentiometers and the tone capacitor appears to be a wax-sealed paper-foil type

mid-scoop this produces, the tone becomes an almost ethereal wash – especially when you introduce the vibrato arm into the mix. The much darker 'rhythm circuit' tone is still something of an acquired taste that tends to find favour with experimentalists and pedal junkies.

Although Strat vibrato units have set the standard since 1954, we think the Jazzmaster design is just as good in its own way. Granted, you can't dive bomb and do all those spandex-rock party tricks, but for pitch-shifting chords, micro bends and shoegaze-y discombobulation, a well set-up Jazzmaster vibrato is hard to beat. They're musical, can demonstrate impressive tuning stability and the low-profile design makes them so easy to use.

In short, this is easily the most inspiring Jazzmaster we've played so far. It's also the most expensive – by a considerable margin – and we would hazard a guess that its new owner won't be dragging it to any 1990s indie revival nights at London's scuzzier drinking establishments. G

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THE MONEY SHOT
FENDER AMERICAN ACOUSTASONIC TELECASTER KOA

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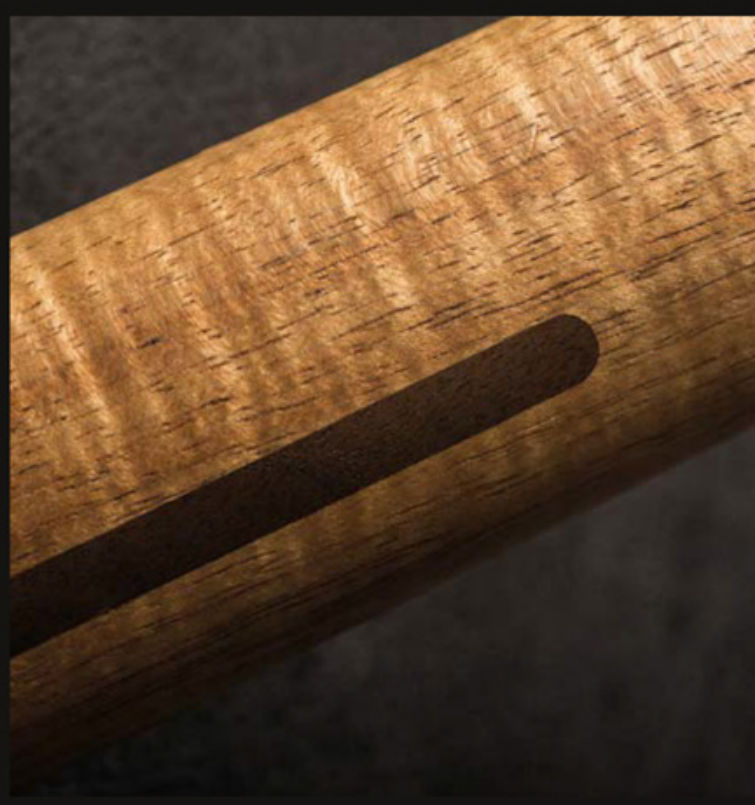
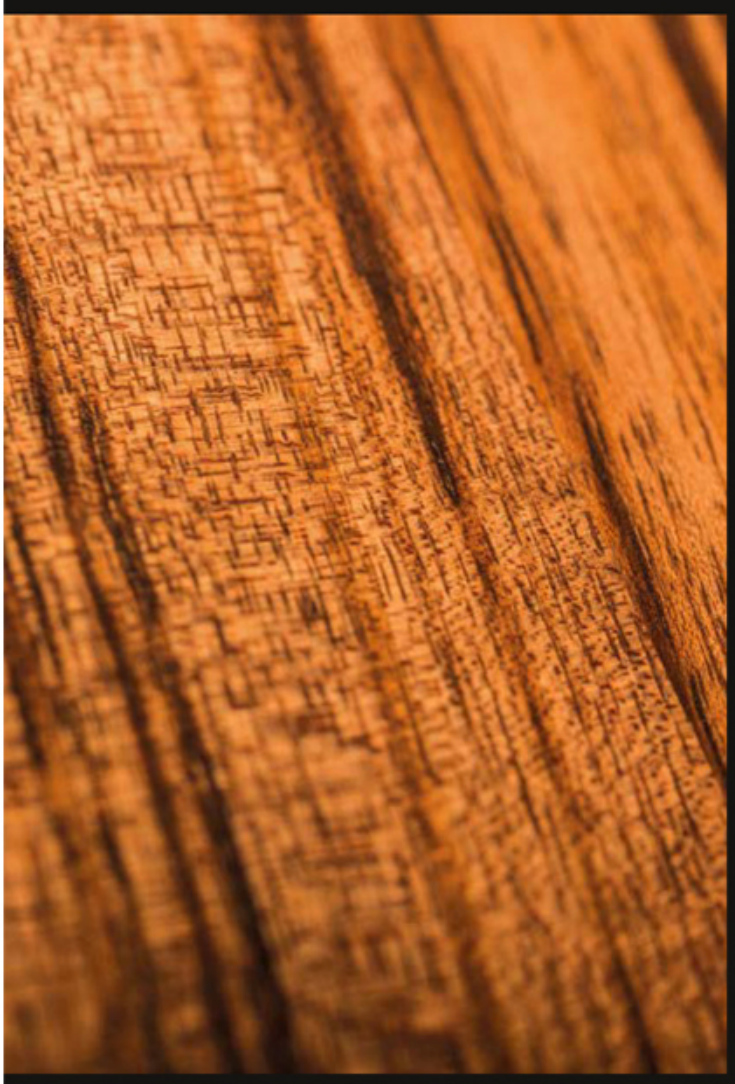
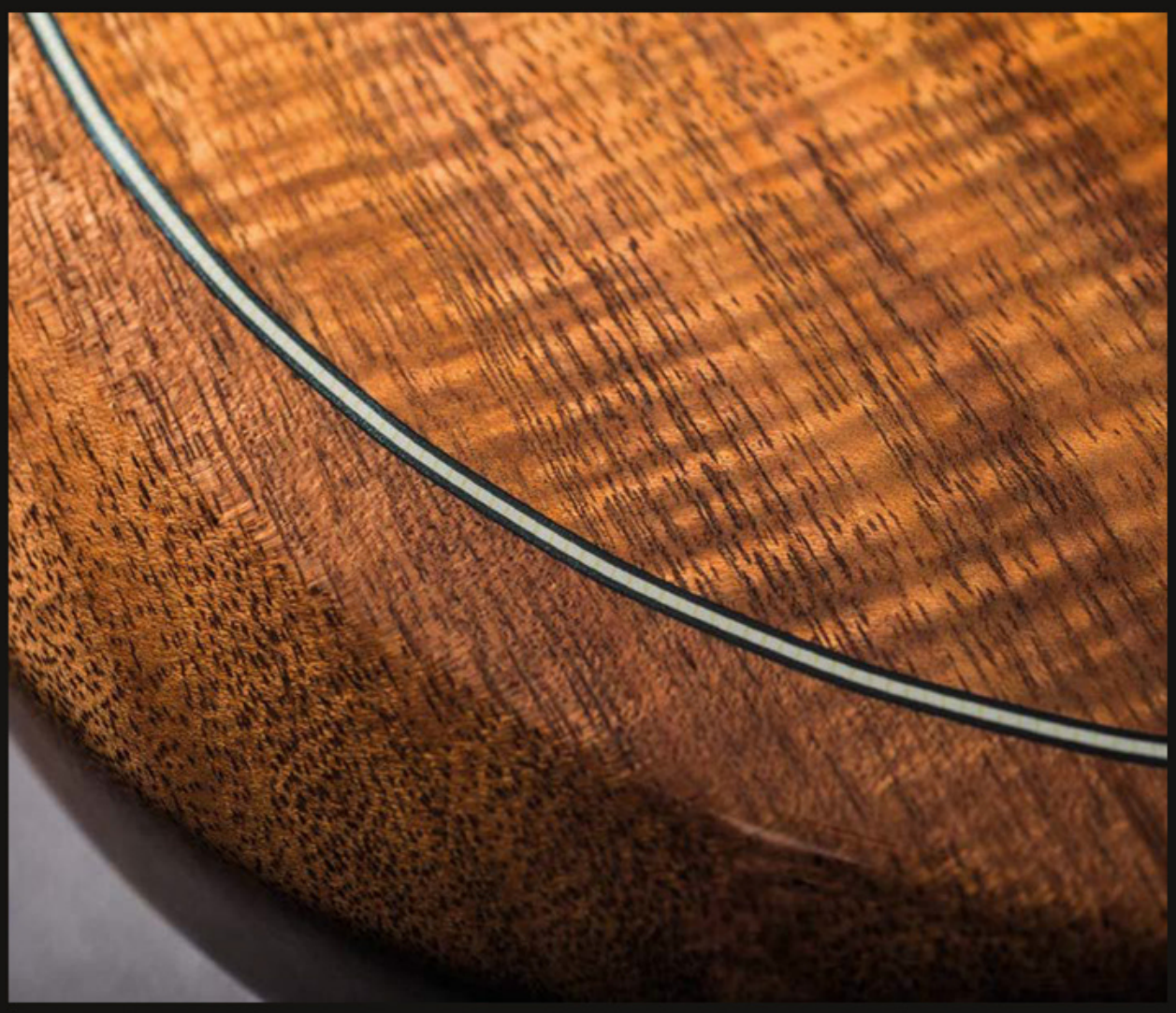



Fender's flexible hybrid design arrived on the scene in early 2019 and the American Acoustasonic Telecaster has since found favour with all manner of players, from looper-toting singer-songwriters to a certain Mr Jack White.

From day one, Fender teased the aesthetic possibilites of the Acoustasonic platform, and this gorgeous model features in the limited-edition Exotic Series that debuted at Summer NAMM in Nashville in July. Ziricote and cocobolo options are also available (all £3,499), but our favourite is this koa-top model with korina back, sides and neck. While the beautifully figured neck's satin urethane finish retains the tactile, organic feel of the original model, the gloss-finished body adds a taste of luxury to the mix and helps give that outrageous bookmatched top a vivid, three-dimensional quality. All the clever internal tech remains present and correct, and if you fancy an upscale version of this most modern of Telecasters, head to fender.com for more information.

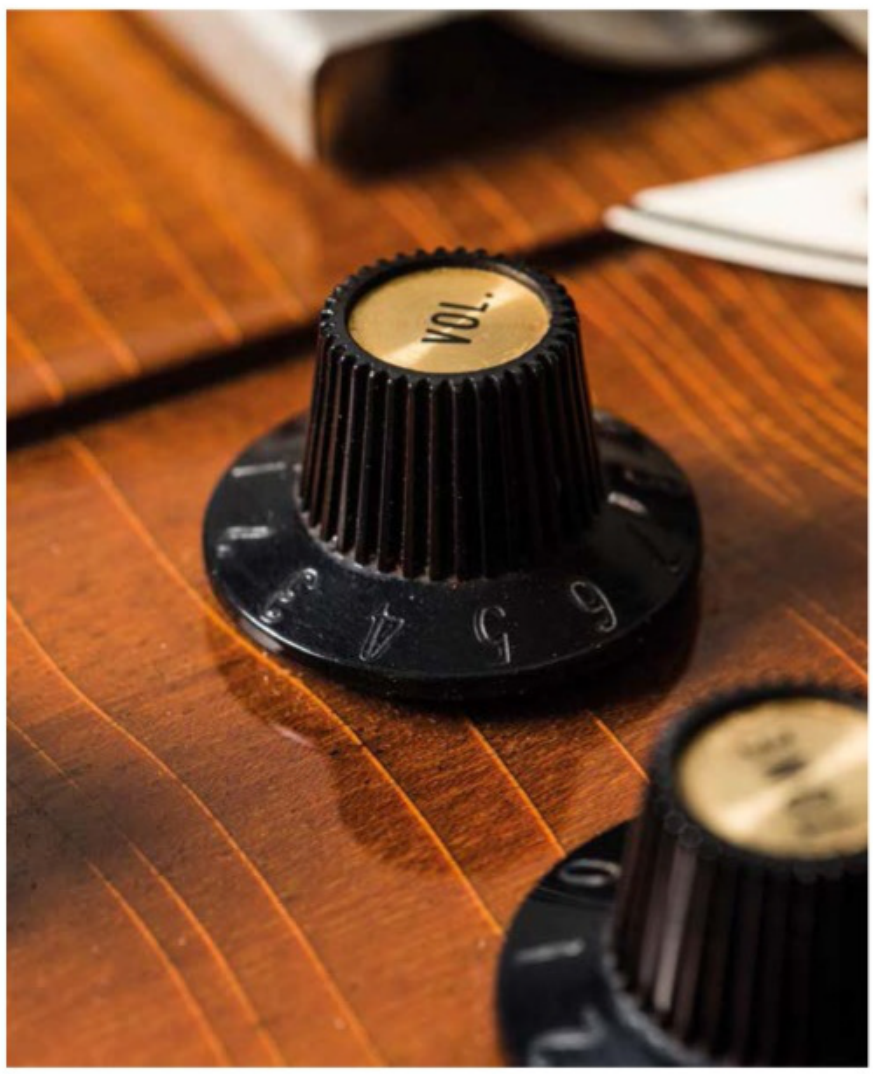


THE COLLECTION

DESERT ROCK

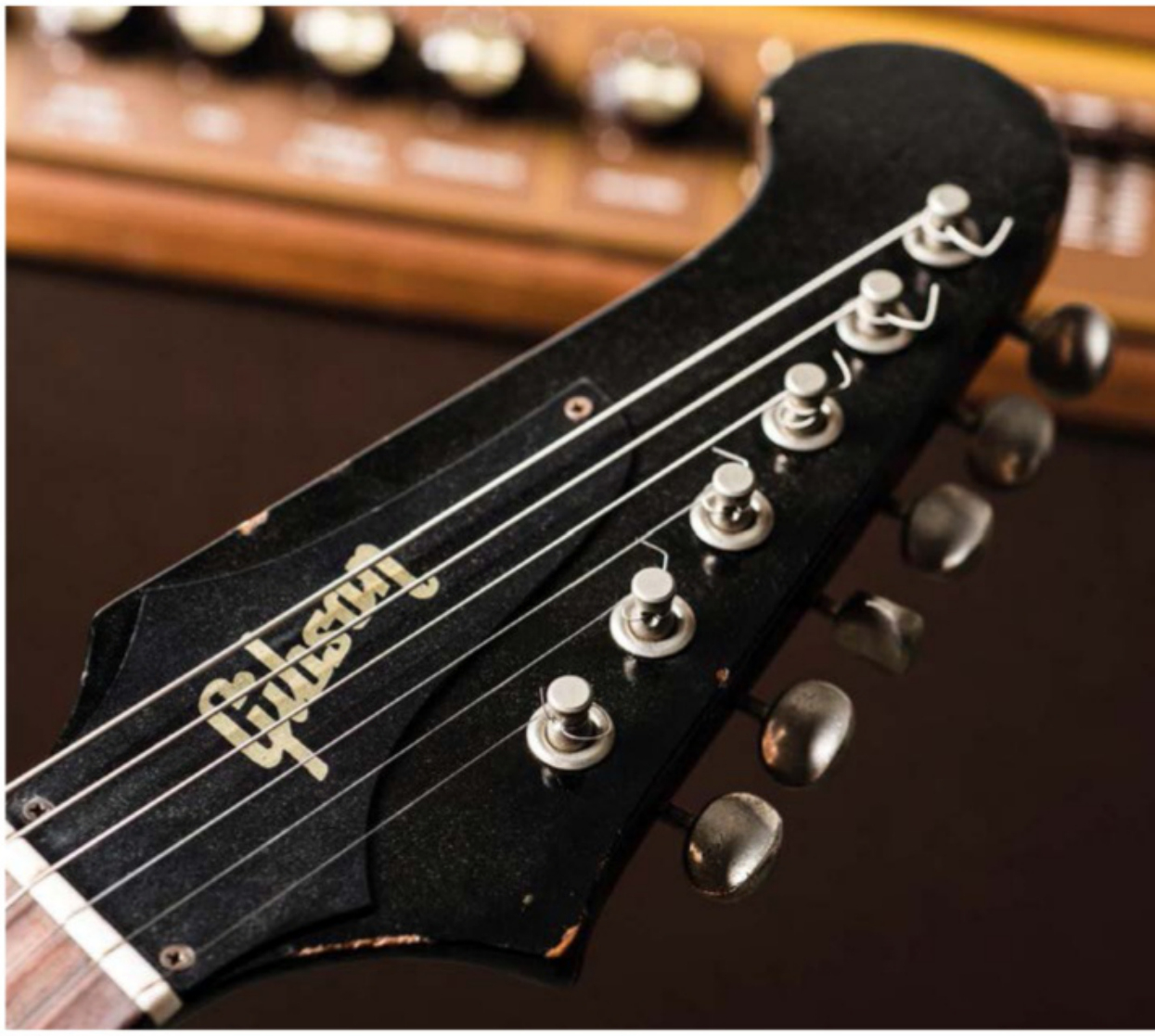
Over the years, musical instrument industry veteran Gary Gand has amassed as many stellar guitars as he has great stories. We head out into the Californian desert in search of a guitar oasis...

WORDS MICHAEL JAMES ADAMS **PHOTOGRAPHY** ELEANOR JANE



In the arid heat of California's Coachella Valley lies the city of Palm Springs, a time capsule of mid-century modern architecture and a place that feels just as glamorous and luxurious as old Hollywood seems to those of us born generations later. Everywhere you turn, it's clear skies, palm trees and bright deco signs for little antique shops that house delightful knick-knacks, Tiki bars whipping up perfection by the glass and the Shag gallery proffering très-chic cocktail-party prints.

Palm Springs happens to be the location for our date with musician, collector and architectural preservationist Gary Gand, who currently resides in the breathtaking and palatial Morse Residence. Parked out front is a '63 Avanti in a lustrous gold finish, which we carefully circumnavigate as we make our way up the gleaming white terrazzo path toward the largest door we have ever seen. The former Alexander tract home, 'glamourised' by famed architect Hal Levitt in 1961, is a vision of class. The feeling of being criminally underdressed creeps over us, swiftly replaced by relief when Gary greets us in nothing fancier than a T-shirt and shorts.

His kind eyes peer from beneath a red baseball cap and his beard could give Billy Gibbons a run

for his money. His wife Joan, on the other hand, is the embodiment of the phrase, "Welcome, friends" in her floor-length blue-and-green dress, offering refreshment while ushering us into the spacious, sunken living room with retractable walls for easy pool access.

Gary was a forerunner in the world of music retail, having played all of the major roles: musician, guitar tech, business owner and sound professional. His incredible foresight made him one of the first to work primarily in parts and repairs and when electronic music changed the face of popular music, Gary rushed to add Moog to his product line. Later, Gary realised Apple computers could one day replace the giant spools of tape used in recording studios, so he worked with the company to make that idea a reality.

Growing up in Chicago, music was a family affair. His father, a former trumpeter and lighting executive, had such an aptitude for teaching music that would eventually lead him to quit his job. "He bought a Stella originally for my mom, but he picked up a Mel Bay book on a Friday, and by Saturday night, he had it all figured out. By Sunday, the rest of us were in the basement taking lessons from him."

When the 'folk scare' happened, his father formed a family folk trio with Gary on banjo, his sister on vocals and himself on guitar. They booked gigs in Arkansas and Virginia and even at the famed University Of Chicago Folk Festival in support of the Civil Rights Movement. "We were fighting segregation and the weapon of choice was *Michael Row Your Boat Ashore*."

Gary cites the New Lost City Ramblers (featuring Mike Seeger) as an early influence. Thanks to the festival circuit, Gary met Seeger as well as Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and Bukka White. There were days spent visiting with Flatt & Scruggs, eating fried chicken at Doc Watson's house, all while driving around the country with his family. All in all, Gary's childhood was very different from the little-league summers of his friends back home.

His exposure to the guitar was near-constant, but it wasn't until he came across a little-known band from Liverpool that he finally picked up the guitar at the age of 10. "My dad says: 'Hey, we should watch this band from England.' Folk was already dying by that time. I still played banjo, but The Beatles made me want to play rock 'n' roll."

'64 FIREBIRD

The first guitar Gary shows us has significant sentimental value for Gary. As the story goes, a '64 Firebird – not this particular bird, mind you – was his very first guitar. He tried one at a local music store and took a shine to it, but left empty-handed due to a huge cigar burn that Gary didn't like. Dad took notice and soon surprised Gary with one of his own.

"THERE WAS CLAPTON, PLAYING A FIREBIRD. ALL OF A SUDDEN, I WENT FROM BEING THIS SCRAWNY KID WITH THE GOOFY GUITAR TO THE COOLEST KID ON THE BLOCK"

"When I got that guitar, nobody was playing them," Gary admits, noting just how uncool he felt among his guitar-playing peers even though he loved the guitar. Their tune changed the day Cream came to town. "I told my mom: 'We have to go see them!' We got $2 tickets at the door – terrible seats – and between sets, I walked up to the stage to check out the wall of Marshalls and The Fool SG."

While he was gawking, the house lights went down and the precocious lad took that as his cue to find a seat side stage. And what did he see when the stage lit up? "There was Clapton, playing a Firebird. All of a sudden, I went from being this scrawny kid with the goofy guitar to the coolest kid on the block."

Gary's owned a lot of guitars over the years, but he really does seem to fancy this one over all of the others. Just like his long-gone original, this '64

THIS SPREAD Gary Gand's 1964 Firebird is a rare transitional model, which blends 'reverse' and 'non-reverse' features. It's leaning up against a 1980s Acoustic 160 combo amplifier

ABOVE Gary Gand picked up this 1964 Gibson SG Custom when he joined a jam band

ABOVE RIGHT This 1959 Gibson Les Paul Custom is one of an estimated 12 made in this mysterious red finish with a trio of PAFs

OPPOSITE TOP Gary plays his red 1959 Les Paul Custom while seated in his 1963 Studebaker Avanti

OPPOSITE BOTTOM The headstock of that ultra-rare Les Paul Custom

example is a rare 'transitional' model with its reverse body and non-reverse six-in-line headstock, P-90 pickups and short-frame Vibrola. Notably, it does have later knobs which look quite smart with those black pickup covers. Here, it's leaning against a 1980s Acoustic 160 combo amp.

RED 1959 LES PAUL CUSTOM

Before the days of the 'vintage' guitar market, players sold and traded guitars without regard for rarity and age; the idea of golden-era collectability and future resale value was the last thing on the minds of most working musicians. At 14, Gary kept an eye on classified ads in the local paper, where descriptions were no more illuminating than 'Fender guitar' or 'Gibson for sale'. And that's just how this intriguing triple-pickup 1959 Gibson Les Paul Custom came into Gary's possession.

"The ad said: 'Les Paul, Red, 3 pickups. $250.' Thinking it was an SG, I called the guy up and said, 'That's the wrong colour for a Les Paul. How many horns does it have?' The guy said, 'One.' I tried to explain it to him, but he insisted it was a single-cutaway body." Too young to drive, Gary convinced the seller to bring the guitar over to his home the next day and bought the guitar for two payments of $125, one on the spot and one due the week after. Having never seen a red three-pickup Custom, he learnt everything he could about the unique instrument. "I know they made about a dozen of these," he explains. "Six were for a dealer in Sweden who wanted something different. Gibson made the first six, so why not make a few more?"

As for that particular shade of red, Gary speculates that it has something to do with mandolinist Jethro Burns of the country music duo Homer & Jethro, who ordered a red Florentine mandolin from Gibson around 1958 for use on television. Gibson may have used that same colour for this guitar, markedly redder than traditional Wine Red.

The 10.2lb beast remains largely as it was the day Gary obtained it, albeit with added play wear from the intervening years. It features its original gold Grover tuners, three PAF pickups and frets worn nearly flat, though it looks to have had some prior fretwork. The finish has checked subtly and the clear coat has taken on an amber tint. Here, it's perched before a 7/8-size Ceriatone full stack that he had custom-built as a tribute to the amp which served as catalyst for Gary opening Gand Music.

"I ordered a white Marshall stack just like the one in the 1970 catalogue. When it showed up, I plugged it in and it started smoking. It took a long time to come back from the shop and the unscrupulous tech who did the work waited to call me for pick up until the warranty period expired, so I had to pay for it. I was so pissed off that I started my own store."

Fed up with the way musicians were being treated, Gary decided to change the culture from the inside, upending the established routine of retail sales. "We were shopping at malls and organ stores talking to guys who didn't know anything. I wanted to be a liaison between musicians and manufacturers. And when I finally opened the store, the first thing I put up for sale was that freaking amp."

WHITE 1964 SG CUSTOM

No stranger to the stage, Gary has found himself in an untold number of bands and jams over the years. In fact, he, Paul Hamer, and Jol Dantzig (of Hamer guitar company fame) had a band back in the early 70s! Ever active in the music scene, Gary came to this stunning piece by way of yet another jam-band situation.

"I met this local guy who was moving to Europe and that he needed someone to take his place in his band. One night, the band invited me on stage, so I sat in and I guess they liked me, because after the gig the guy comes up to me and says: 'Listen, I'm quitting and that was an audition.'"

One condition of joining the band was that Gary had to purchase this white SG, but he doesn't seem fussed over it. "I wasn't an SG guy back then – this was the 80s – but there was Clapton and Krieger. Angus was happening back then."

This '64 model is still in excellent shape considering its age and how much it's been used. It's mostly original, although Gary suspects the truss-rod cover to be a replacement. It has a thin, ast neck profile as well as a Bigsby vibrato.

With as much play as this one's seen over the years, it's remarkable that the frets still have plenty of life left and even the binding nibs appear to have survived. The look is completed by original gold hardware, waffle-back tuners and a faded white finish that has the requisite chips and cracks of a well-played, well-loved instrument.

1960 GIBSON LES PAUL STANDARD

If Gary's 1960 Gibson Les Paul Standard looks familiar to you, that may be with good reason. Featured in the pages of the Vic DaPra book *Burst Believers*, this particular Les Paul may be a fully restored instrument, but in Gand's opinion, it "blows away so many original examples".

“MY DAD SAID, ‘HEY, WE SHOULD WATCH THIS BAND FROM ENGLAND.’ I STILL PLAYED BANJO, BUT THE BEATLES MADE ME WANT TO PLAY ROCK ’N’ ROLL”

Fender
VOLUME
TREBLE
BASS
VOLUME
TREBLE
MIDDLE
BASS
REVERB
SPEED
INTENSITY

Nicknamed 'Le Freak', the guitar has been refinished and refretted, but otherwise it retains most of its original parts. PAF humbuckers, hardware and tuners are all present and correct, though the guitar shows signs of having worn a Bigsby tailpiece, with still-visible mounting holes poking through its subtly flamed, honey-toned faded top. It's a light Les Paul at 8.2lb, with a fast neck and the kind of strident attack that seems synonymous with less portly instruments.

"It's squawky and nasty, not like the hairy, beefy sound of others," he offers. Other collectors may have dismissed a refin out of hand, but guitars with issues seem to be right up Gary's alley. "The greatest Les Paul in the world is Jimmy Page's and that guitar was refinished, so what does that tell you?"

1954 FENDER STRATOCASTER #0163

By this point in the interview process, gorgeous vintage guitars are being swapped from person to person in a flurry of activity, but the only person in the room who seems unphased by the dollar value of this juggling act is their owner. "I play all of these guitars out on the town," Gary reassures us. "I'm not a trailer queen about it. Don't worry."

Gary hands off his 1954 Stratocaster to us with a wry smile. "This is my go-to guitar, no big deal." The backplate has #0163 stamped into it, clearly an early example. This Stratocaster boasts the highly coveted V-shaped neck profile, original pickguard and pickup covers, the original single-line Kluson tuners, a stunning two-tone Sunburst finish, and play wear denoting years spent in the cowboy-chord positions on the neck. When he got this guitar in the 90s, Gary says it was the best-playing guitar he'd ever felt. In fact, it played so well that he hasn't changed the setup or strings since!

"I never touched this one, never even adjusted the action. It's so perfect as it is, I'm afraid to change the strings."

The strings may be black with corrosion, but we can't argue with the way it plays. When asked how he'd cope with breakage, Gary notes that Roy Buchanan only changed strings when one broke. "Hey, that's good enough for me."

1959 GIBSON FLYING V

Gary acquired this 1959 Gibson V as a tribute to the great Lonnie Mack, who passed away in April 2016. A longtime fan of the blues-rock master,

FACING PAGE Nicknamed 'Le Freak', this 1960 Burst has been refinished and refretted, but according to Gary, it still "blows away" many other original LP Standards

ABOVE Gary bought this stunning 1954 Stratocaster in the 1990s and the strings haven't been changed since!

"THE CAR WORLD DOESN'T ATTACH THE SAME VALUE TO ORIGINALITY LIKE WE DO IN THE GUITAR WORLD. ORIGINAL TYRES? YOU DON'T GET BONUS POINTS FOR THAT"

FACING PAGE This 1959 Flying V has had plenty of work done over the years, but Gary is a fan of player-grade vintage instruments

ABOVE Gary's 1967 Trini Lopez Standard is a stunner – and Trini himself happens to be Gary's next-door neighbour

Gary initially nabbed a red reissue, but soon he found himself pining for the real thing. Eventually he tracked down this guitar at a bargain price.

"The issues made sure it was priced reasonably," Gary states matter-of-factly before listing them off: "Changed tuners, likely refinished, and a cracked headstock…" He trails off for a moment, then stakes his claim on the notion that such afflictions shouldn't be deal-breakers. "People say a cracked headstock doesn't sound as good, but to me, it's still the same guitar after the fix."

Gary replaced a few parts here and there, most notably the pickguard, yet it still retains some signs of originality. The gold hardware has weathered and even the telltale reddish "bleeding" around the pickups is present – a reaction between the finish and the M69 pickup rings. Gary's also added a makeshift ground wire, which you can see wrapped around the low E string. Strummed acoustically, this Korina V has a shockingly mellow vibe, soulful and plain-spoken.

Ruminating on the obsession with originality, Gary looks at the contrast of the music world with that of car collecting: "The car world doesn't attach the same value to originality like we do in the guitar world. You can take something that's scratched, dented, rusty, you replace all the stuff and it goes directly into the value. What you put in comes out of it again. Original tyres? You don't get bonus points for that."

'67 GIBSON TRINI LOPEZ STANDARD

Owning a signature-model guitar can make a person feel closer to the famous player associated with it. But what happens when that namesake is your next-door neighbour?

"Trini is the nicest guy in the world," a gushing Gary tells us. "He has the best stories, talking about how Sinatra was 'such a nice man' and Dean Martin this, Princess Grace [Kelly] that."

The Gands met the famous singer-guitarist about eight years ago at a party and they hit it off instantly. Soon enough, Gary started working on Trini's guitars and is now in the midst of producing a documentary on the legendary musician. Gand is also custodian

THIS PAGE This Wandrè Brigitte Bardot model is one of the rarest – and most unusual – guitars in Gary's impressive collection

to a pristine vintage Gibson Trini Lopez model, a birthday gift from his wife Joan.

This 1967 thinline remains totally original with its bright chrome hardware, cherry-red finish, nylon bridge saddles and witch-hat knobs. Similar to an ES-335 of the same year, it's the diamond-shaped f-holes, split-diamond inlays, Firebird headstock and an engraved plaque on the trapeze tailpiece that make it that much cooler. Here, we've paired it with one of Trini's own amplifiers, a circa 1965 Fender Princeton with his name sprayed on the grille cloth.

WANDRÈ BRIGITTE BARDOT

For just over a decade, Italian guitar maker Antonio Vandrè Pioli offered some of the most unique and interesting instruments to hit the 60s scene. These days, they're tough to find and when you do, it's likely you won't like the price, thanks to the reputation for quality workmanship and oddball design. Gary confesses: "I know I paid too much."

A Wandrè in such excellent condition is a rarity, to be sure. Named for the maker's obsession with a certain French actress, this black Brigitte Bardot model also came from France. "A guitar-dealer friend of mine called me up and said: 'I found one in a French music store. If you don't want it, I'm calling Johnny Depp.' I said, 'Yeah, okay, I'll take it.'"

This Bardot is beautiful and has some of Wandrè's most common design elements: trapezoidal pickups, pickguard-mounted pickups and bridge, hinged aluminium 'broom stick' neck and an interchangeable headstock design which allowed for customisable configurations. Inlaid into the 'board are the Wandre logo, the initials B.B., and the designation 'Export'.

Two volumes and a single tone control are mounted to a chrome-plated plate attached to the guitar top and Gary claims the bridge is so easy to adjust that you can make changes between songs. "Say you're playing a rock song, but you need a slide guitar for the next, you just change it and go."

"It's technically the best guitar there is," he beams, a proud owner through and through. Truly, the Wandrè is eccentric, exotic, and exceptional.

Though impressive to say the least, what we've shown here is only a fraction of the six-string magnificence on tap at the Gand household. We could have easily gone through another 10 or 20 guitars and maybe we will down the line. But for now, it's time to head back west on Interstate 10 and leave the desert sand behind. G

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1964 Gibson ES-345 TDVC
1956 Gibson ES-175D
1959 Gibson ES-175D Players
1967 Gibson ES-330L Burgundy

1934 Gibson Super 400

1957 Fender Stratocaster Mary Kaye
1959 Fender Stratocaster maple neck
1961 Fender Stratocaster Blonde
1962 Fender Stratocaster Fiesta Red
1963 Fender Stratocaster Olympic White
1969 Fender Stratocaster S/B
1973 Fender Stratocaster LPB
1982 Fender Stratocaster AVRI

1952 Fender Telecaster ex-Lenny Kravitz
1953 Fender Telecaster
1956 Fender Telecaster
1958 Fender Telecaster Custom Prototype CATALOGUE guitar!
1967 Fender Custom Telecaster Candy Apple Red
1968 Fender Telecaster Thinline
1969 Fender Telecaster Sonic Blue

1959 Fender Jazzmaster Blonde
1963 Fender Jaguar Blonde Gold
1966 Fender Jaguar Olympic White

1952 Gibson Les Paul Goldtop
1955 Gibson Les Paul Goldtop
1968 Gibson Les Paul Goldtop
1958 Gibson Les Paul Custom
1960 Gibson Les Paul Custom
1974 Gibson Les Paul Custom
1955 Gibson Les Paul Junior
1959 Gibson Les Paul Junior 3/4
1960 Gibson Les Paul TV Junior
1956 Gibson Les Paul TV Special
1962 Gibson Les Paul SG STD Ebony Block
1963 Gibson Les Paul SG STD
1963 Gibson Korina Flying V White

1966 Fender Jazz Bass Sonic Blue MINT
1953 Fender Precision Bass
1980 Musicman Bass MINT!

1963 Gretsch Tennessean
1972 Dick Knight Custom Twin Neck ex Jon Camp Renaissance
1967 Rickenbacker 360/12 Gold Parts

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STAR GUITAR
CASTING SPELLS

This nicotine-stained Telecaster saw plenty of action before finding its way to its latest custodian, Joe Bonamassa. Take a closer look at a guitar with country mojo and stories to tell…

WORDS MICHAEL JAMES ADAMS **PHOTOGRAPHY** ELEANOR JANE

We all remember the stories of Merlin, wizard of Arthurian tales who, since first appearing in fiction in the 1100s, has popped up in all kinds of modern media from *Justice League* comics to an eponymous Netflix series and strangely enough, as a character in Michael Bay's incomprehensible *Transformers: The Last Knight*. With a wave of our wands, we've conjured a guitar which showcases a different sort of magic, one that just happens to share a name with the famous enchanter.

Upon first introductions to this nicotine-stained 1967 Telecaster, Guitar Center's Nick Conte tells us that it was the main axe of LA-based guitarist Merlin Moran. Moran was an "old-school player" who slung guitar for none other than Linda Ronstadt during the early days of her career. Ronstadt, frequently referred to as The First Lady Of Rock, boasts a number of Grammy Awards and nominations for her work, a truly impressive career that really deserves its own article.

When Merlin's tenure with Ronstadt ended, he formed a new band called Moccasin, which only released a single record. "Eventually, he was kicked out of the band," Conte explains, "and the members of that band went on to form The Tractors, who went on to be Grammy-nominated."

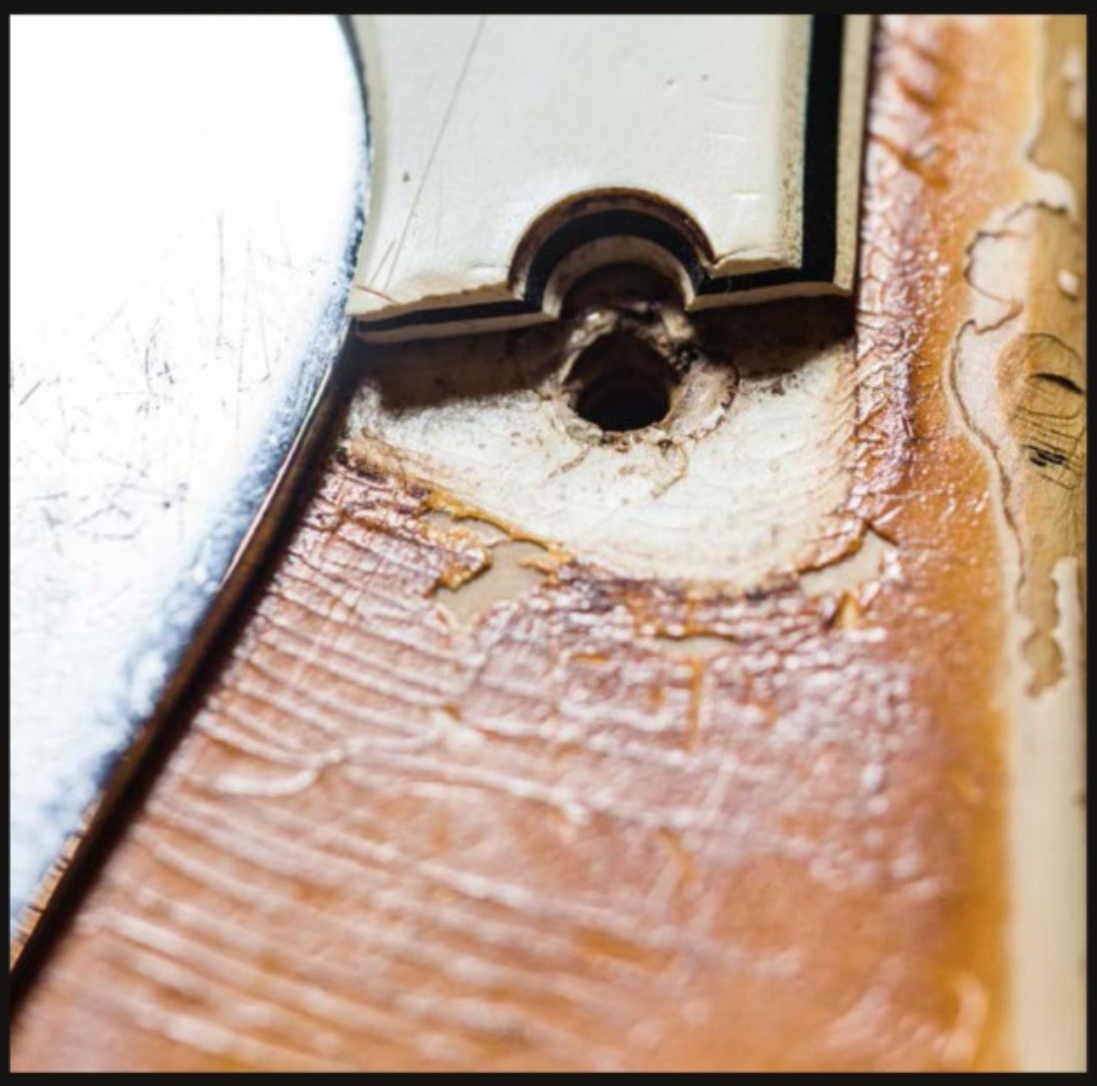
Easily identifiable as Merlin's guitar by the red label on the bass-side bout, this guitar may only share a name with the fictional magician, but that doesn't make it any less magical. It's obvious from the giant, unfaded patch on the body that this guitar has seen some smoky barrooms in its day, as the majority of the finish has turned to that inconsistent shade of orange that's common for white or blonde guitars from the pre-cigarette-ban era of music-making. Believe us, the guitar has the smell to match. We're told that the unfaded spot was once covered by a huge sticker and upon closer inspection, it appears to have left a paisley pattern tan line in its wake.

Worn in all the right places, the maple-cap neck plays easily and has a rather delicate profile. The guitar appears to be mostly original save for the addition of a Gibson T-Top humbucker in the neck position. At the time of this photoshoot, the bridge pickup wasn't functioning, but thankfully, the guitar had an appointment with the GC tech that day. We wish Merlin a speedy recovery.

Tucked inside the case are a number of interesting artefacts, including headshots of Merlin the player, a strap with his name on it and even a cassette tape of the man's music. Sadly, no Walkman was available at the time for us to hear it.

Nick Conte tells us that he had just scored the guitar for none other than Joe Bonamassa, who plans to play the guitar as-is. "Joe likes either really, really clean stuff or really, really beat-up stuff," Nick reveals.

Interestingly, Nick purchased the guitar from a person who grew up in Rochester, NY, which is where Bonamassa himself is from. "The guy told me that the first concert he ever saw was Joe opening for BB King. Small world." G



Fender
TELECASTER

MERLIN

ASK THE AMP GUY

In the second instalment of his new column, Rift Amps head honcho Chris Fantana tackles the topic of impedance…

Have a burning question about your amp, or worse still, a burning amp? Email us at editors@guitar.com

Hi Chris. I have to admit, I'm completely confused by impedance when it comes to mismatches, how it impacts on volume, etc. Could you explain it in simple terms so I never have to worry about blowing up my amp ever again? Thanks!
NIGEL SMITH, VIA EMAIL

Simple terms? You got it! To start, impedance is to AC (alternating current, not air conditioning) as what resistance is to DC (direct current). They are both measurements of how difficult it is to pass an electrical current through an object. To confuse things slightly, both resistance and impedance are measured in ohms. The higher the 'ohm' rating, the more difficult it is to pass electricity through it. Got it? Let's move on.

When it comes to transferring an audio signal (which, by the way, is AC) from one part of a circuit to another – such as from your guitar pickups into an amplifier, or from the amplifier to the speaker – having a matching impedance allows for the most optimal transfer of signal, power, harmonics and all of the other lovely tonal goodies that we want. This is how the designer intended the circuit to operate and we should do everything we can to match that.

For example, if your amplifier wants to see an eight-ohm load and we connect an eight-ohm speaker to it, everything will be transferred across efficiently and will work as designed.

However, we've all been there; turning up at a venue with our amplifier head only to find that the backline cabinet is a different impedance to what we normally use. Sound familiar?

So what do we do in that situation? The first – and most important – rule is that ANY load is better than no load. You must not, under any circumstances, run your valve amplifier without a speaker connected to it. While some models may tolerate this to a point, never assume it is safe to do so.

Secondly, check if your amplifier already has either a switch, or a separate output socket that will allow you to match it to the cabinet. Most modern amplifiers will have various output sockets with the most common impedances, allowing connection to a wide range of cabs.

Thirdly, if you can't match up to the cabinet, then go for the nearest impedance to the cabinet on the higher side, like so:

4-ohm cab – 8-ohm output
8-ohm cab – 16-ohm output

This means you are connecting a lower load to the amplifier than it expects to see. This is much safer than connecting a higher load and most amps will happily run like this. You may notice a drop in output power – somewhere along the lines of 30 per cent – but clarity should remain the same. Connecting a higher load to the amp can be done at an absolute push, but the chances of damaging the amplifier are much higher, should something go wrong.

It's worth saying that in these scenarios, I would be wary of running the amplifier flat out: just give it some electrical breathing space and you'll get through the gig no problem. If you're really worried and still not sure what to do, Weber makes a fantastic device called the Z-Matcher that allows any amplifier to connect to any cabinet.

It sits in between the two units and via two rotary switches, you select the impedance of both the amp and cabinet. I use one on my test bench, so I can run customer's amplifiers into my 16-ohm 2x12. If I'm gigging a head, I'll take the Z-Matcher with me, knowing I can connect to whatever cabinet is at the venue – priceless! G

Visit riftamps.com to find out more about Rift's range of British-built, hand-wired valve amplifiers

BELOW The Z-Matcher by Weber solves potential problems with impedance mismatch by enabling any amp to connect to any cabinet

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INDUSTRY INSIDER

BEETRONICS FX

INTERVIEW JOSH GARDNER

With stunning scuzzy sounds and equally stunning enclosures and build quality, Beetronics has become one of the hottest brands in the effects world. We chatted to the LA company's head honcho, Filipe Pampuri…

How did you get into guitar playing in the first place?

"I've been playing guitar since I was 12 – my dad used to play and started teaching me very early. Music became the only path for me and my older brother as we grew up playing together back in Brazil, where we were born and raised. We played in many bands and owned a recording studio where we worked recording and producing bands for many years.

"Then 10 years ago, one of our bands got signed to a record label from Los Angeles and that how we ended up moving to the US. For about seven years, we toured with that band and released three records, eventually that band broke up and that's when we started Beetronics."

Were you tinkering with creating effects before then?

"When we moved to the US, our record label owned a really big recording studio, called NRG Studios and they had a house tech that would fix all the gear that got broken. I thought that if I ever moved back to Brazil to have a studio again, we'd need someone in-house to fix our gear, since we do not have as many techs or easy access to parts, etc.

"And so I figured I would start learning how to fix my stuff! I started to research electronics online, and a good starting point was DIY guitar pedals."

How did it grow from there?

"They were never intended to be sold. At first, my goal was to just build all my pedalboards with my own stuff so no one would ever have 'my sound'. At that time, I also started developing the looks of the pedals. My wife, who's an architect, designed the enclosure boxes and I had a friend's help to make a logo. However, I was doing it all, just for fun – I hated the idea of ever selling them.

"A few years later, my band broke up and I was playing as many gigs as I could in order to pay the bills. Then one time, a friend of mine plugged one of my pedals in with his bass and flipped out and kept asking me to buy one. Eventually, I needed money and ended up selling it to him.

"After a week, he had, like, five other people wanting to buy it as well and I quickly found myself selling quite a few every week. After a little while I asked my brother to be my partner, and then we put together a website and made our first bigger batch of pedals.

"We had the idea we would sell out in about six months… we sold out in a week! By that time, we had some following on Instagram already and I guess we underestimated the amount of people interested in buying it. So for the next six months, we kept on figuring out how to build more and more and sales kept on going well."

Was it all off your own back? Did you get any investors involved or anything?

"No, we never had anything like that. We invested $1,700 each to make our first batch of pedals and after that, we kept on reinvesting and we've never had to put in a dollar out of our pockets since.

"We did go all-in a few times, where if things went wrong we would pretty much need to start it all over again, but it never went wrong. We invested a lot of our time and sweat, and we also have a lot of friends who have helped us along the way to get where we are at."

At what point did you feel like you 'nailed' your branding?

"I believe the first time I felt that was at our first NAMM Show. Anyone who's been to our booth at the show, knows that it's like Comic-Con for pedals at our little hive! We bring in a team of beekeepers and we make some pretty cool-looking booths and ways to display our products. We also bring a tonne of custom-painted pedals and always release a cool new product at the show. We have a lot of fun doing it and I believe that is a time when people get to see and feel that coming from us."

What's the best-selling product that you've released so far?

"Our best-selling product is the Royal Jelly, so far. It's a very special pedal for me since it

“OUR PLANS ARE TO BETTER CONNECT OUR PASSIONS FOR MUSIC, RECORDING, ART, EFFECTS AND BRING IT ALL TOGETHER AND EXPAND THAT IN EVERY DIRECTION. WE ALSO HAVE NEW COLLABS ON THE WAY”

was designed in collaboration with Howard Davis, a legendary designer who’s known for having designed the original Deluxe Memory Man. It was our first collaboration and we wanted to come up with something that would be very different from anything in the market and still be on the fuzzy-bee-vibe we always had.

“I believe the idea of blending drive and fuzz – and the way it was executed, it’s pretty amazing! I’m very proud of how that pedal came out. It’s aggressive and versatile, it’s modern but can sound pretty vintage and can cover a lot of ground on the gain section of a player. It can also be used by many different instruments… and every day I get surprised seeing someone using it differently.”

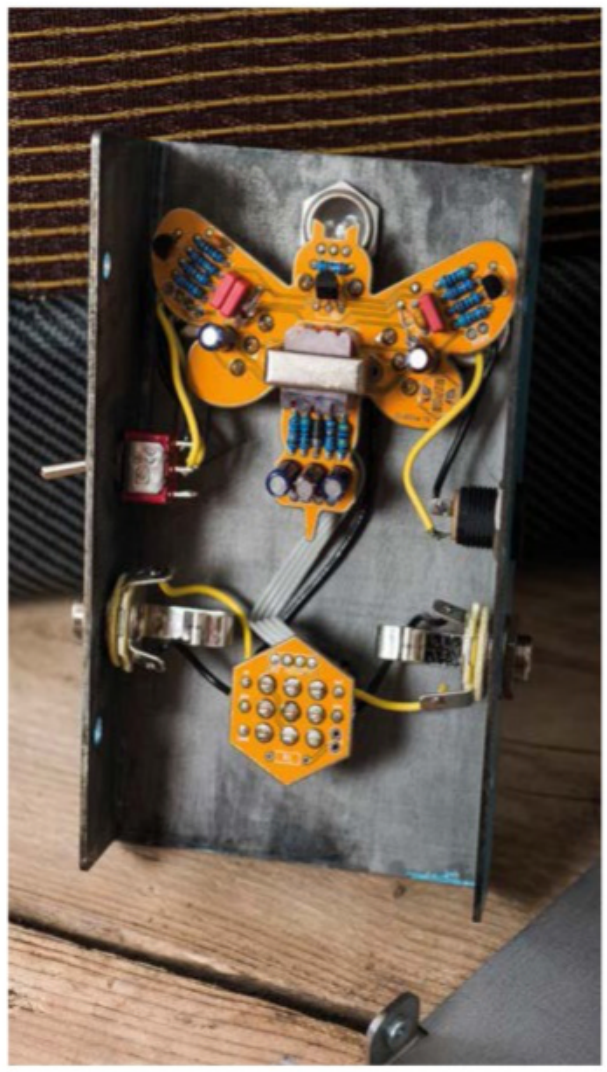
What’s your proudest moment on your journey so far?
“It always makes me proud when I see a player that I admire using our pedals and so far, the brand has taken us places I never imagined. But a moment that made me proud was a couple of years ago when Robert Keeley made a big post on his social media talking about our brand and how he loved everything he saw us doing. That meant a lot for me!

“He is a guy who’s been doing this for very long and has tonnes and tonnes of knowledge. So to see him giving us a compliment like that made me very proud.”

What do you think the biggest challenge for the guitar industry is in 2019?
“The biggest challenge for guitar in general is to remain relevant in a world where more and more kids do not buy a guitar as their first instrument, they buy an MPC and a controller and start making beats. A challenge that relates to this, is to find the right blend between analogue and digital. I believe finding that right blend can be key in order to connect the guitar world to the world of computer/beats/synths.”

So what’s next for Beetronics?
“Our plans are to better connect our passions for music, recording, art, effects and bring it all together at our Hive and expand that in every direction. We also have many noisy bees on the way, including new collabs!”

For more info, visit beetronicsfx.com



SHOP TALK

JAMIE STILLMAN AND JULIE ROBBINS

EARTHQUAKER DEVICES

WORDS DAVE HUNTER

Can you still fly the 'boutique' flag once your roster hits 50 employees and you've won a Small Business Exporter Of The Year Award? EQD's Jamie Stillman and Julie Robbins talk maintaining the small-shop attitude in a big-shop world…

Although he played guitar in several notable bands himself (Ohio hardcore outfit The Party Of Helicopters among them), Jamie Stillman mainly segued into the pedal-making business via his gig as tour manager for one of the world's most popular indie bands of the 2000s, The Black Keys, which found him building pedals for pal Dan Auerbach's board on the side.

After founding EarthQuaker Devices in 2004 or early '05 in a basement in Akron, Ohio, Stillman released EQD's first production-run pedal, the Hoof fuzz, in '07. He continued working with The Black Keys up until 2010's breakout smash album *Brothers*, but the pedal business quickly escalated from a project to a business that demanded his full attention.

Stillman's wife, Julie Robbins, joined the company full-time in 2011 as CEO to help him keep it all growing, bringing with her a wealth of business nous from her previous positions heading a talent agency and working in the banking industry and EQD was driving full-steam ahead.

Throughout the boom, the brand became known as a company that wasn't afraid to reinvent some beloved classics, while offering several fun and original new designs that nevertheless presented original and usable sounds, rather than merely shooting for the aural extremes for which some small makers strove as the field got more and more crowded. It was – and remains – a winning formula, and EQD has thrived.

SOUND EXPLOSION

"I feel like around 2010-ish, somewhere in that area, was when [the pedal market] really exploded," says Stillman. "And… I still feel you can tell which companies are going to stick and which ones aren't. And it almost has nothing to do with how cool or unique the products are; it's more to do with the things around every company: their general vibe, or the other things that they do."

While some of EQD's pedals might seem rather 'out there' – consider the Afterneath reverb/delay,

the Data Corrupter Modulating Monophonic Harmonizing PLL, or the Disaster Transporter SR modulated delay and reverb – each proves an eminently usable effect, with massive creative potential and pretty instantly gratifying results once you start turning some knobs.

"I think even the stuff that people regard as 'crazy' in the EarthQuaker line really isn't that wild by comparison to some of the things that are coming out now," says Stillman. "And a lot of the things are way above my personal patience to get. I don't want to sit and read a manual for a full day and then spend a week tweaking something to make the most insane sound I've ever heard.

"I'd rather turn a couple knobs and play through it and be like, 'that's what it does!' That's my personal preference and it's also why we don't have a lot of pedals where you've got to look at the manual to figure out a feature.

"I think there are more guitar players now who are more tolerant of those learning curves and MIDI-diving and stuff. I'm not one of them."

Robbins sums up the EQD pedal line this way: "We have a lot of pedals you could use to replace something that already existed on your pedalboard to go on tour on a record you already wrote. And then another portion of our line is probably better to help inspire you to write your next record."

"Another thing I battle with when designing stuff," Stillman relates, "is you can kind of make any DSP-based pedal do anything – it can be a reverb, a distortion, a delay – but it can't really do a good job of each one and it can't use more than a couple at a time without making it this huge pedal.

"I don't know, really, how useful all-in-one, small-format pedals are. I'd rather have one pedal that does one thing and does it well. And I kind of think the point of having this stuff is to add to making music more interesting or fun or whatever, not to try to solve a math equation."

That being said, while plenty of companies are pushing toward the outer fringes of sonic mayhem to get attention, Stillman still sees a lot of love out there for the old standbys, and loads of companies are doing perfectly well cranking them out.

"I think I still see new pedal companies starting up that have the standards, like a Big Muff, or a RAT, or a Tube Screamer, or just a regular clean boost. I don't think people are sick of that stuff, either. People still get really excited about it."

ILLUSIVE EFFECTS

Like any creative designer and manufacturer, there are likely to have been some ideas with exciting potential that just didn't pan out. Curious to hear what might fit that column for such an adventurous maker as EQD, I probed Stillman about the ones that got away.

"WE HAVE PEDALS YOU COULD USE TO REPLACE SOMETHING ON YOUR PEDALBOARD. ANOTHER PORTION OF OUR LINE IS BETTER TO INSPIRE YOU TO WRITE YOUR NEXT RECORD"

ABOVE Julie Robbins has been EarthQuaker Devices' CEO since 2011

"Yeah, there have been a few," he confesses, "but they're all kind of still in progress. I like to keep them secret. There's one thing in particular that probably will never come out, because at this point, the parts are really hard to find. I won't call it a pitch-shifter, but it changed the pitch and was kind of a harmoniser… more of a phaser-y pedal built around an NIC that was designed for voice-changing megaphones.

"I have been working on something that uses that for eight years and it almost came out. We did a little documentary a couple years ago and there's a quick shot of that pedal, called Sonic Reducer. We had enclosures, we had the circuit board and then at the last minute, I was like, 'This really isn't as cool as it should be…'

"It went back to the drawing board and we're still working on it. And every time I take it out – like, once a year – and play with it, for like the first 10 minutes I think it's amazing and ready and then I find something about it that I have to go back to."

And then there are the R&D efforts that never quite came to fruition in and of themselves, but which spawned something else that's simultaneously unexpected, unplanned for, and wonderful.

THIS SPREAD Pedal assembly and testing at EarthQuaker Devices' Akron, Ohio HQ

"THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE WHO WORK HERE PROBABLY LEAN TOWARDS NEW ROCK AND METAL OR EXPERIMENTAL STUFF. BUT ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE USE OUR PEDALS"

"That stuff can end up being cool. The Afterneath was like that and Bit Commander and Organizer and stuff like that. I think any more, a lot of times I have a crazier idea and it either becomes unachievable with what we have to work with, or tamer than I envisioned."

GRAND DESIGN

Although he still conceives all of EQD's new pedals and designs the majority of them, Stillman has more help these days than he did when he was breadboarding in the basement, particularly with the more complex delay and modulation effects. He works closely with a third-party that does the platform that Avalanche Run and Pyramids are built on, for example, "because it's way over my head as far as the DSP." And even beyond that, a lot of effort involves outsourcing the manufacture of power supplies and the circuit board layouts and that sort of thing.

"And I work with them to come up with the algorithm," he elaborates. "It's more of saying: 'Here's what I want to do, a delay and reverb,' and I sit beside him and play guitar through it and tell him what to change."

When quizzed about his favourite new product of the past year or two, Stillman presents an answer that might seem surprising for a guitarist and effects nut who revels in noise-crafting and sonic melding.

"Swiss Things," he declares without hesitation. "I made it initially just for my own – well, that can be said for a lot of things that we make – initially, just for my pedalboard and then got very excited about it, because it solves a tonne of problems that I've always had: with volume pedals, and being able to remove all of your effects out of the chain, reducing noise, making everything sound clearer.

"It exceeded my expectations and I was super happy about it. But when I first started trying to tell people about it, they were like, 'So… it's an A/B/Y box? A booster?'

"Then when you see it in use… I think even when it first came out, a lot of people bought it just because they were excited for a new EarthQuaker pedal and didn't realise how useful it was until they started using it. I had a lot of people come up to me at the NAMM Show this year to say they were just curious, and now they don't know how they ever got their pedalboard together without it. I think that's the thing I've been most excited about in a long time."

TREND SETTERS

Although EQD has forged no end of new sounds, the company tends to resist mass trends in the industry and very much paves its own road instead. Among recent flavours-of-the-month that they'll be avoiding, Stillman observes, "I feel like we're currently watching granular delays explode. People are way into those at the moment and I've never seen anybody use one live. Maybe I'm watching the wrong bands or something, but it seems like there's a lot of those popping up. I like that sound, but I've never been drawn to make something like that."

Asked whether the broad range of effects in the EQD lineup appeals particularly to one breed or genre of player, Robbins offers: "I would definitely say they're used by *all kinds* of players, although the overwhelming majority of people who work here have more experimental tastes, and probably lean more toward new rock and metal or experimental stuff. But all kinds of people use our pedals."

Among the more extreme of such users, EQD recently designed and manufactured a pedal in collaboration with the American drone-metal band Sunn O))), an eponymously named distortion in an enigmatic black box with two footswitches and the knobs on the forward face of the housing.

"It's our first artist-collaboration pedal," says Stillman. "It was a pretty awesome experience, and they had their hands on everything. Stephen, one of the guitar players, did all the artwork for the pedal and the packaging and they worked directly on the

sound of the pedal and everything in it is exactly what they wanted. I made one version of the pedal and gave it to them and said: 'This is what I like.' And they were like, 'Nope, *this* is what we want!' And we pretty much worked hand-in-hand to develop this pedal. It just came out [in mid July] and the first run of them was 1,000 and it sold out in six hours!"

"We're doing two more colourways in the next few months," adds Julie, "and soon we'll be working out the exact release dates and how they're going to be distributed."

Then, moving on to discuss EQD's latest offering, both Stillman and Robbins first note the irony, given our earlier talk of companies cranking out 'the standards' in the wake of the Akron manufacturer's unbridled originality.

"It's kind of funny what it is, after what we were talking about," Stillman hedges. "We're coming out with a Tube Screamer! It's called Plumes. I came up with the idea when we were working on Palisades, so it's an idea that's been around since the Palisades development, so it is much more straightforward than something like that and has a closer sound to the traditional Tube Screamer than the Palisades does.

"The way that I would describe it is it's more of a hi-fi version of the Tube Screamer. It uses JFETS and input and output buffers and that just makes everything. There's a little more presence to it, and lower noise. It's louder and has more headroom, and the sound is… I want to say 'stiffer', but that's not the right word for it, because it doesn't sound 'stiff'.

"It has a three-way clipping switch, which gives no clipping for a clean boost, symmetrical clipping like in a Tube Screamer and asymmetrical clipping that's sorta' like a setting that I really liked on that Landgraff Dynamic Overdrive, it's something similar to that. And the tone control is really useful all the way, it keeps more bass but there's also more high end.

"It's a very loud and cutting pedal, but still has the recognisable Tube Screamer sound to it. It's a small-format pedal and it's got a lower price point than pretty much all of our other pedals. It retails at $99. There's a lot of 'em around, but this one's really useful. I like it a lot."

But don't take this long-awaited release of the EQD Screamer-alike as an indication of some kind of right turn toward Normalsville for this phenomenally creative manufacturer.

"I guess I can share that after this, it's probably going to be the last 'normal' pedal for a while," says Stillman. "There's going to be a lot of stuff coming out over the next year or two that's a *lot* more experimental." **G**

Visit earthquakerdevices.com for more info and read our review of the Plumes overdrive on p118

AFFORDABLE OFFSET GUITARS

WORDS JOSH GARDNER

Looking for an angular guitar on a budget? Here are the best options to satisfy your eclectic electric cravings, while offsetting your losses…

FENDER VINTERA '60S JAZZMASTER
£799

1 Fender produces more varied and affordable offsets than anyone else, and perhaps no other model is more crowd-pleasing than this new Vintera 60s Jazzmaster from the company's more vintage-authentic MIM line. An alder body and bolt-on maple neck provide the classic vehicle for Jazzmaster jangle, which comes courtesy of new vintage-voiced 60s single-coils and a floating vibrato. The Vintera range features an array of appealing neck shapes, and this playable thin-C profile feels both authentic and enjoyable.

GUILD S-200 T-BIRD
£699

2 The original Thunderbird has been wielded by the likes of Muddy Waters, Zal Yanovsky and most recently by Dan Auerbach. Strapping one on, it's hard not to channel that scuzzy garage-blues spirit, but this S-200 isn't a one-trick pony. With its myriad knobs and switches, there's real scope to shape the sound of the guitar's twin Guild LB-1 Little Bucker pickups, with the old-school Tremar vibrato unit further enhancing the versatility. Pick of the knobs is a low-cut tone capacitor.

SQUIER CLASSIC VIBE STARCASTER
£439

3 The Starcaster's original run only lasted from 1976 to 1980, but Fender reissued the model in 2013. For 2019, however, Fender has made the Starcaster more accessible than ever before, adding a range of new models to the Squier line. This Classic Vibe is the most faithful to the original, but instead of the 1970s version's six-saddle bridge, there's a more generic Adjusto-matic and stoptail combination, while the master volume knob has been ditched in favour of a classic two volume, two tone arrangement.

FENDER METEORA
£859

4 The Meteora was one of the hits of NAMM 2018 and quickly earned a place in the hearts of many guitar players. Following its success as a limited-run USA-made instrument, Fender has sensibly released a lower-priced version. That retrofuturistic offset body shape is the main talking point, paired here with a dual-humbucker layout and Adjusto-matic bridge. Unlike the USA version, however, we get a pau ferro board, and a trio of classic finishes – Candy Apple Red, Surf Green and Lake Placid Blue.

EPIPHONE LTD EDITION SLASH FIREBIRD
£599

5 Those looking for an affordable take on Gibson's reverse-bodied classic face fairly slim pickings. Thankfully, here to help is… Slash. Epiphone has graced him with this well-spec'd limited-edition guitar offering an affordable route into Firebirdom. With its mahogany body and AAA flamed maple top, this isn't exactly your grandaddy's Firebird, but with Seymour Duncan Slash humbuckers and high-end Sprague Orange Drop capacitors, it offers serious bang for your buck. Just 900 are being made worldwide.

FENDER PLAYER JAGUAR
£599

6 The Player series is Fender's most affordable Mexico-made range, with a variety of player-friendly tweaks to conventional recipes. The Player Jaguar retains the essential elements of the classic design, most notably the short 24-inch scale length and 22 frets. Gone, however, is the usual Jaguar single-coil bridge pickup. Instead, it's replaced by a humbucker – aping so many grunge-era mods – while the neck single-coil is still present and correct. Also gone is the idiosyncratic switching, though there's an added coil-split switch.

ITALIA MODENA CHALLENGE
£879

7 The Trevor Wilkinson-designed Italia brand delivers eccentric electrics that nod to 50s and 60s catalogue guitars. The retro-vibed Modena Challenge's German-carved Korina body stands out from the crowd in a pair of metallic finishes – Goldburst or Turquoise. Wilkinson E-Z Lok machineheads keep tuning nicely stable in combination with the Bigsby vibrato. A trio of Filter'Tron-style Wilkinson double-coil humbuckers completes the package and adds plenty of versatility.

FENDER DUO-SONIC
£519

8 The Duo-Sonic's various iterations always keep things stripped down. Its latest guise is a short-scale MIM offset guitar that's punchy, light and compact. It comes in SS and HS flavours; the latter offering a coil-split option for the bridge 'bucker. The 50s spirit is kept alive with three classic colour options – black, Surf Green and Daphne Blue. The short scale length isn't for everyone, but it's an essential part of the Duo-Sonic recipe, and one that has a deep offset association all of its own.

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Los Angeles

Sasha Dunable makes some scarily good guitars in Glendale California. We had one through as a trade in a while back and were so impressed that we contacted Sasha and got him to build some for us.

Fender

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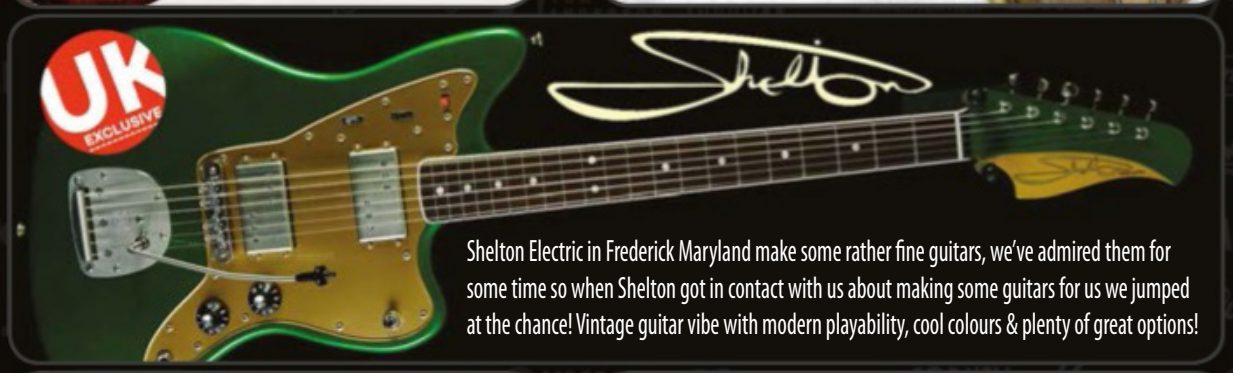

Shelton

Shelton Electric in Frederick Maryland make some rather fine guitars, we've admired them for some time so when Shelton got in contact with us about making some guitars for us we jumped at the chance! Vintage guitar vibe with modern playability, cool colours & plenty of great options!

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BUNTING
MELODY QUEEN

WORDS CHRIS VINNICOMBE

Guitar EDITOR'S CHOICE

Boutique offsets may have become almost as popular as fuzz pedals with hand-painted enclosures, but the Bunting Melody Queen is much more than an attempt to jump on the bandwagon…

From Gil Yaron to B&G and Macmull, the last decade has seen a steady stream of inspiring luthiery from Israel. Based on our encounter with the Melody Queen, Bunting Handcrafted Guitars looks set to continue the trend.

Based 40 miles north of Tel Aviv, Bunting is the brainchild of former photography and art student Yaniv Loria. Inspired by golden-era designs, Loria began making guitars in his parents' garage, but later set up shop with experienced tech Guy Shapira. The founder of Liquid FX, Shapira is also working on a line of Bunting stompboxes.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Bunting uses a mixture of traditional and modern woodworking approaches and Loria and Shapira finish their guitars by hand, using oil and shellac, drawing inspiration from the 17th-century European instrument-making tradition.

The Bunting range comprises two versions of the Melody Queen (with Jazzmaster or Tele-style appointments), a pair of double-cut 'Jackal' models, two versions of the shorter-scale 'Alice' and a single iteration of the 'Spiro'. The latter is a P-90/wrapover model we're desperate to get our hands on after hearing an extraordinary demo on Instagram.

The Melody Queen's outline is rather like a Jazzmaster with a softened upper horn, but on removing it from its Hiscox case, it's apparent there's plenty to differentiate this from the Southern Californian offset that inspired it. For starters, the body is made from German spruce and is remarkably light. Press your ear against it and strum a few cowboy chords and you can hear more than a little flat-top acoustic in its intriguing unplugged accent.

Then there's the oil-and-wax-finished Bosnian maple neck with its wild flame and the highly evolved hardware; the obligatory Mastery bridge is accompanied by a Duesenberg Diamond Deluxe Tremola (a removable arm that can be rotated through 360 degrees and string-through anchoring make this a thoughtful update on the B5), while locking Gotoh tuners with staggered-height posts negate the need for a string tree.

All of Bunting's timbers are old-growth, with alder available as an option on the Melody Queen for a small upcharge. Bosnian maple – a European mountain maple indigenous to the former Yugoslavia

The Duesenberg Diamond Deluxe Tremola features easy string loading

– is highly regarded in the violin world. It's the standard wood used for all Bunting necks and Loria and Shapira say it's lighter, with more midrange than the North American equivalent.

Handle the Melody Queen and it's hard to argue with this assertion; there's a lightness in the neck and huge top-to-tail resonance that's rare in brand-new solidbodies. The 10-inch radius fingerboard sports 22 frets and is made from reddish-brown Madagascar rosewood, which Yaniv feels has "more punch on its attack" than Indian rosewood, while the rolled 'board edges, medium-C neck profile and thin finish make for a seriously inviting feel.

The Tuxedo Black paint job's thoughtfully positioned array of dings and wear isn't excessive and the prominent grain reminds us of Dennis Fano's Novo models. Some may find the Bunting headstock logo a little rustic, but it fits in with the overall vibe.

If this were our personal guitar, we'd perhaps opt for a slightly lower string height at the nut, but our only real concern is that the body finish seems to have become a little smeary in the areas in which it's been in contact with the case-lining during transit. Hopefully, it's something that'll buff out.

IN USE

Prior to plugging in, our amp was set up for a P-90 Junior, so it's a testament to the quality of the Melody Queen's Mojo Jazzmaster pickups that the Bunting doesn't sound in any way unsatisfying following the junkyard-dog tonality of the Gibson. Over the years, we've found stock Jazzmasters a little hit and miss with overdrive – sometimes just too scratchy and nasal for our liking – but when this type of guitar hits the mark, it nails it.

When driven, the Melody Queen's raw, abrasive punch and sinewy dynamics put us in the right ballpark for The Black Keys, Junior Kimbrough and garage blues. Although everyone understandably associates offsets with the salty splash of

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £2,750 (inc. hard case)
DESCRIPTION Offset solidbody electric guitar. Made in Israel
BUILD German spruce body, Bosnian maple bolt-on neck with 10-inch radius Madagascar rosewood fretboard, 22 Jescar 47090 frets, bone nut
HARDWARE Mastery Bridge, Duesenberg Diamond Deluxe Tremola short vibrato tailpiece, Gotoh locking machineheads with vintage-style buttons and staggered-height posts
ELECTRICS 2x Mojo Jazzmaster (58-64) pickups, master volume, master tone (with Emerson paper-in-oil 0.022uF capacitor), 3-way toggle pickup selector, Beef (series) and Cream (high-cut) slider switches
SCALE LENGTH 25.5"/648mm
NECK WIDTH 41.9mm at nut, 51.5mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 21.9mm at first fret, 23.7mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 34.2mm at nut, 51.9mm at bridge
WEIGHT 3.25kg/7.16lb
FINISH Tuxedo Black (as reviewed), Hipster Green, Summer Sky Blue, Madmen Red, Vintage White, Bazooka Pink
OPTIONS Firebird humbuckers. Visit website for more custom options
CONTACT The North American Guitar thenorthamericanguitar.com, buntingguitars.com

surf, there are plenty of juke-joint tones in the good ones, too.

Clean things up and there's twang and shimmer in abundance. When amplified, the Melody Queen's acoustic resonance and sustain translates into a longer and more even decay than you might expect from an offset and it really suits the smooth Duesenberg vibrato. Raked chords down by the bridge sound predictably epic into cavernous reverb and tremolo, but rein in the ambience and change your attack and there's an array of tones to suit many styles, from indie and funk to Americana.

The master volume, tone and three-way toggle switch operate as you'd expect, but what about that pair of sliders on the top horn? Referred to by Bunting as 'Beef' and 'Cream' (Cream being the closest to the strap button), Guy Shapira explains things as follows: "Beef is a series switch, which bypasses the pickup selector and basically gives you a preset of a humbucker-type tone. Cream is a high-cut switch, which gives a preset filtered tone. It's a nod to the traditional Jazzmaster's 'jazz' circuit, but it's pre-set."

Activate either of the modes and you'll find that the guitar's volume and tone pots are still fully functional, which further expands the possibilities. With the Beef switch in the 'up' position, step on a Tube Screamer and it's like engaging the Melody Queen's secret weapon. The ensuing full-fat rock tones will confuse the hell out of the guitar players in the audience and when you roll the tone control back, single notes take on Muff-like fuzz characteristics.

It's a similar story when Beef and Cream are engaged together with the tone control wide open, although Cream's preset filter brings more nasal attitude to the mix, which works really well for Queens Of The Stone Age-style riffs and powerchords.

With Cream alone, the pickup selector comes back into play and the trio of filtered tones on offer are best enjoyed with drive. There's almost an octave-fuzz flavour at times and it's fun to experiment with if you are looking for lead tones with bags of character. There are a lot of sounds in this guitar!

9/10 **Light and resonant, with great tones... a must-try for fans of upmarket offsets**

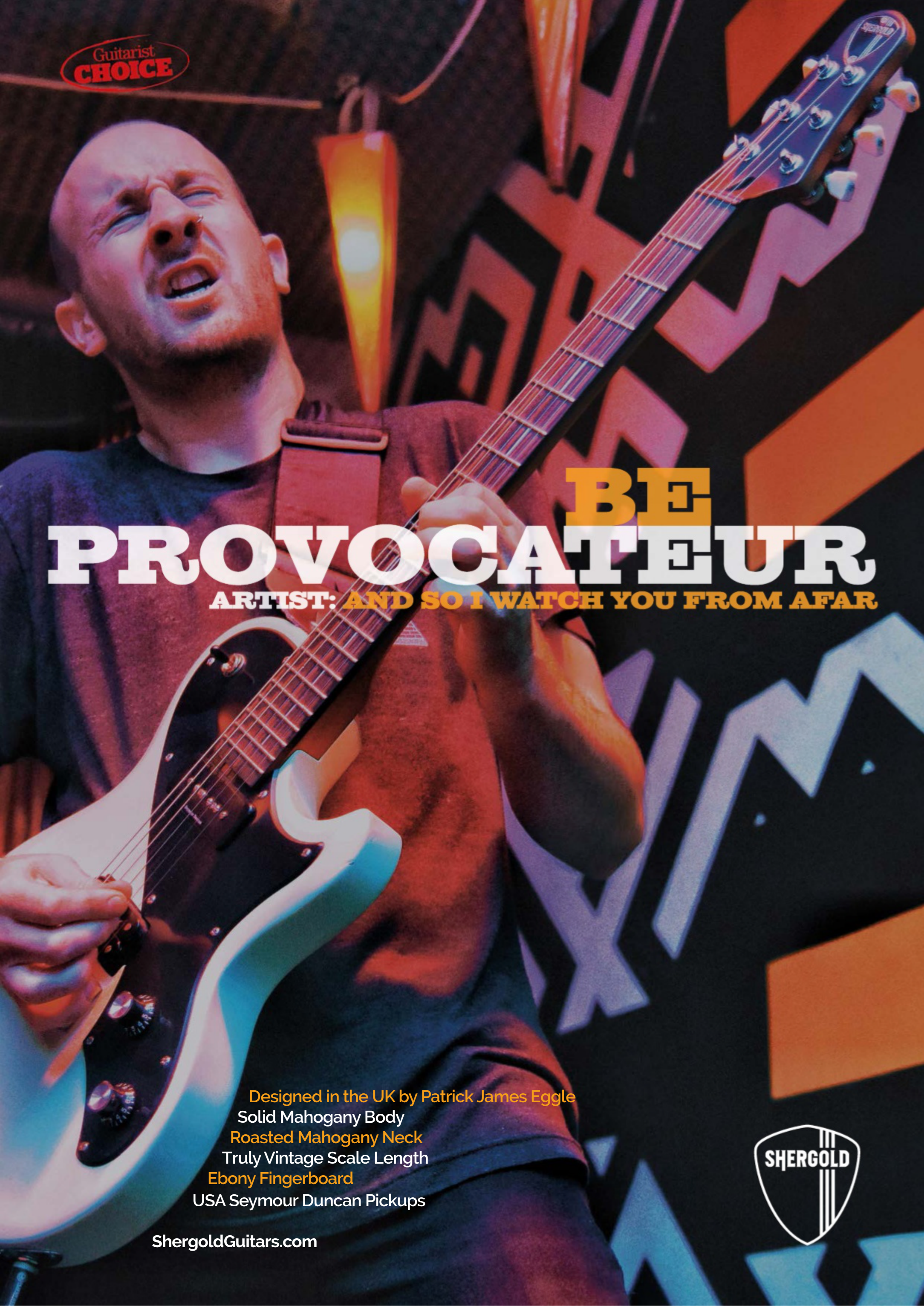
LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Fender Vintera '60s Jazzmaster Modified **£899**, Vuorensaku Guitars T Family 'Birke' **£3,899**, Novo Serus J **£3,299**

These sliders offer Beef (series) and Cream (high cut) tone configurations

The distinctively styled headstock has Gotoh locking machineheads with vintage-style buttons

The Melody Queen has a 10-inch radius Madagascar rosewood fretboard and 22 Jescar 47090 frets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SUPRO
1296 SILVERWOOD

WORDS HUW PRICE

The Silverwood was described as "Supro's finest electric" in the company's 1960 catalogue. This brand-new reissue combines simplified controls with in-vogue Gold Foil pickups…

Though they might not represent the high-water mark of electric-guitar design from a playability or performance standpoint, there's no denying vintage Supro guitars have style. They've certainly become collectable, too, and over the years, have found favour with an array of artists from Jimmy Reed to David Bowie and Dan Auerbach.

Whenever classic instruments and amplifiers are being recreated, the current custodians of the brand are faced with a dilemma – should they remanufacture exact replicas of the originals, or should concessions be made to playability and practicality? And how do you do so without sacrificing the vibe and idiosyncrasies that are key to the brand's appeal?

In the case of the 1296 Silverwood, Supro has veered towards the latter. We think it's a good call. There was definitely a 'more is more' attitude towards electric-guitar marketing in the late 1950s and early 60s and as a consequence, many original Supro guitars were blighted by lots of oddly placed and impractical knobs and switches.

Here, things are simplified, with a single three-way pickup-selector switch combining with master volume and tone controls. The output jack has been shifted from the top to the side of the three-piece solid mahogany body and to our eyes, the German carve around the front and back edges is much less pronounced than that of vintage examples. Perhaps the most significant departure is the set maple neck replacing the original two-bolt arrangement. This has added binding for the classic asymmetrical headstock and the rather nice pau ferro 'board. We're impressed with the tuner buttons, headstock and switch plate, as well as the art deco-style 'S' cutout tailpiece with aluminium anchor block.

The rounded pickup rings are a creditable nod to the past, too, but the Telecaster-style knobs are more of a curveball. Tune-o-matic bridges clearly weren't a vintage feature, but it's undeniably preferable to the original wooden jazzbox-style bridge.

The finish quality impresses, with a very smooth, not-too-thick gloss. It enhances the mahogany, especially on the rear. The back of the neck is black; there are hard transition lines at the headstock and heel as gloss goes to satin. There are several colour options and this model is also available with an ash body and attractive natural finish.

18+

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The classic asymmetrical headstock is complemented by the tuner buttons

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £1,049
DESCRIPTION Solidbody electric guitar. Made in Indonesia
BUILD 3-piece mahogany body with front and back German carve and edge binding, maple set neck with medium-C profile, bound pau ferro fingerboard with acrylic block inlays and 22 medium-jumbo frets
HARDWARE Supro tailpiece, tune-o-matic bridge, 3-on-a-plate Kluson-style tuners
ELECTRICS 2x Gold Foil pickups, master volume, master tone, three-way selector switch
SCALE LENGTH 629mm/24.75"
NECK WIDTH 43.2mm at nut, 52.5mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 20mm at first fret, 21.5mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 35mm at nut, 51mm at bridge
WEIGHT 3.53kg/7.8lb
LEFT HANDERS No
FINISHES Transparent Red (as reviewed), Daphne Blue, British Racing Green, Ash Natural
CONTACT JHS jhs.co.uk, suprousa.com

The Silverwood's Gold Foil pickups are an update on the Clear-Tone pickups of yesteryear – they're humbucker sized and their heights relative to the strings can easily be adjusted with screws on the treble and bass sides.

The Gold Foils combine clarity, attitude and looks

The wiring is simpler than that of many 60s catalogue guitars and vintage reissues

IN USE

The Silverwood has a medium weight, balances nicely on the strap and lap and plays like a professional-quality guitar. Its C-profile neck retains a fairly consistent depth and, with medium-jumbo frets, the feel is more contemporary than vintage.

The unplugged tone is full, warm and displays impressive natural sustain. There's no excessive treble and the upper mids have a quacky woodiness that we tend to associate with certain Gibson models. There's also a very even response all along the fingerboard.

There's much to like about this guitar, but the pickups are the main event. It's an unusual combination of hi-fi clarity and lo-fi attitude that gives the Silverwood bags of sonic character.

The bridge unit combines full-bodied low midrange with quacky upper mids and a wiry extended treble. It'll do country, edgy blues and even garage punk with a touch of overdrive assistance. Over on the neck unit – or position one on the 'tone switch' – the tone is just as bright, but there's a warmer and rounder quality that encourages jazzy chord voicings and mellower blues phrasing.

We often find that brightly voiced 'hi-fi' pickups fare better with clean tones than overdrive. Perhaps it's the extended treble and fast response that can get a bit spiky with square waves. Happily, these Gold Foils have no such issues, because they respond to overdrive by easing into a natural compression. One might compare them to DeArmonds when played clean and P-90s when dirty, but there's a distinct treble sheen and openness that makes the Gold Foil tone unique.

Combining the pickups leads to a slightly phase-y midrange scoop that emphasises the snarl and addictively boxy twang. With a thumb pick, a hint of overdrive and the tone control backed off a smidge, it's just about perfect for old-school rockabilly and Chet picking.

Sonically, it's all good, but the one-size-fits-all factory nut is lacking in finesse and we have concerns about the pickup-selector position. It's a nod to the National Glenwood (another guitar with Valco heritage) and shifting the Silverwood's switch from its original position below the bridge clears space for the volume and tone controls. Even so, it can be awkward to use.

Clearly, vintage Supro guitars have provided inspiration for a lot of contemporary guitar designers. With its Gold Foil pickups and modernised fittings, some members of your audience might even assume that the Silverwood is a recently conceived boutique guitar. Instead, it's a product that ticks many of the boutique boxes, yet is available at a much lower and very tempting price point. G

8/10 **A modernised but sympathetic reissue, with great pickups and playability**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Duesenberg Starplayer **£1,131**, Eastwood Airline '59 Coronado **£1,140**, Fano Standard RB6 **£1,699**

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EASTMAN T484

WORDS CHRIS VINNICOMBE

A large semi can be unpredictable and unwieldy – and that's the way many of us like it. But if you're looking for something more compact and controllable, the T484 could be the answer…

Standing six feet and two inches tall, I need a smaller electric guitar like I need the person sitting in front of me on a longhaul flight to recline their seat. However, there are many players for whom the full 16-inch width of an ES-335 is too much of an armful, hence the popularity of scaled-down semi-hollow models such as Gibson's ES-339.

From a guitar-maker's perspective, there are two common ways to approach a small thinline build. One is to simply take the ES-335 formula (laminate top, back and sides, solid centre block) and shrink it. The other is to carve out the back and glue on the top. Gibson's ES-339 opts for the former solution, while its CS-336 showcases the latter.

Back in 2018, we checked out Eastman's T184MX, which, much like a CS-336, features a carved mahogany back. But instead of incorporating a full-length 'centre block', the T184MX has a mahogany block beneath the bridge and tailpiece that's glued between raised sections of the top and back.

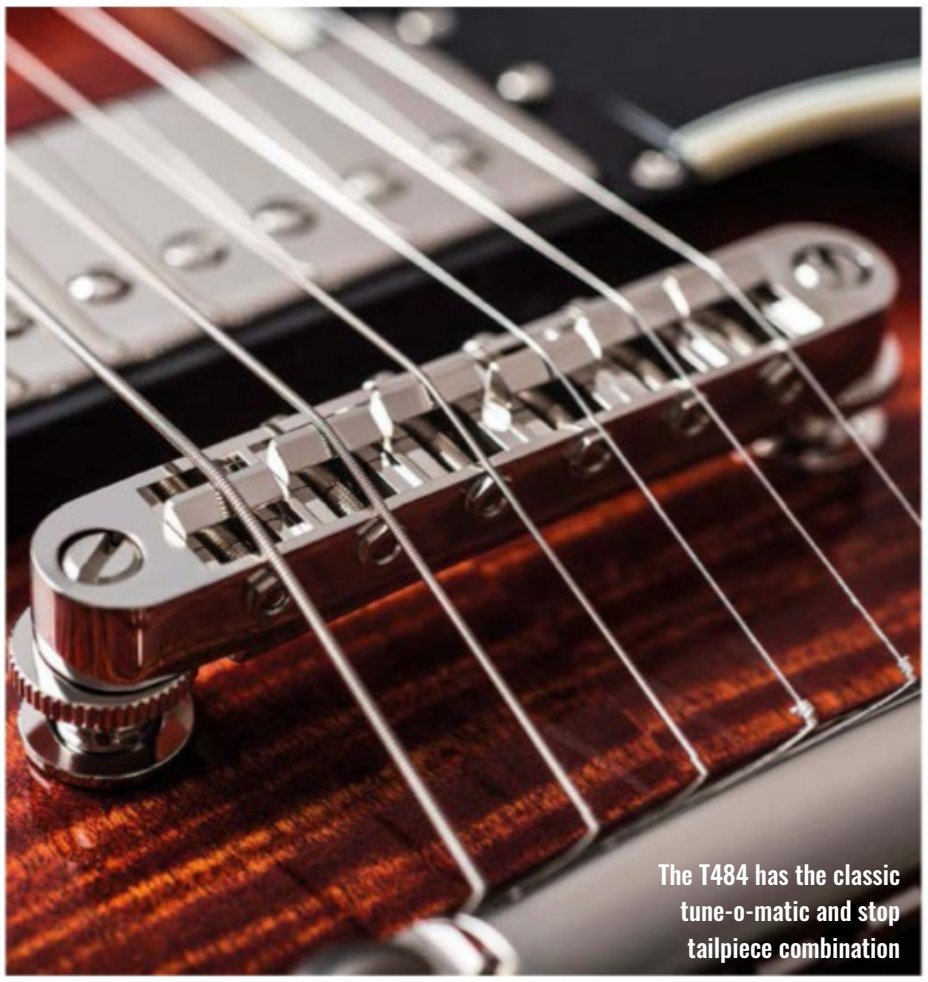
Like the ES-339 and similar models, Eastman's T484 is a simpler laminate affair, hence the significant price differential between our review model (£1,239) and the T184MX (£1,999). That's not to say too many corners have been cut – the T484's outer-body layers provide another symphony of fiddleback maple from a company that knows a thing or two about violins, while the build is the cleanest and most precise we've seen from Eastman.

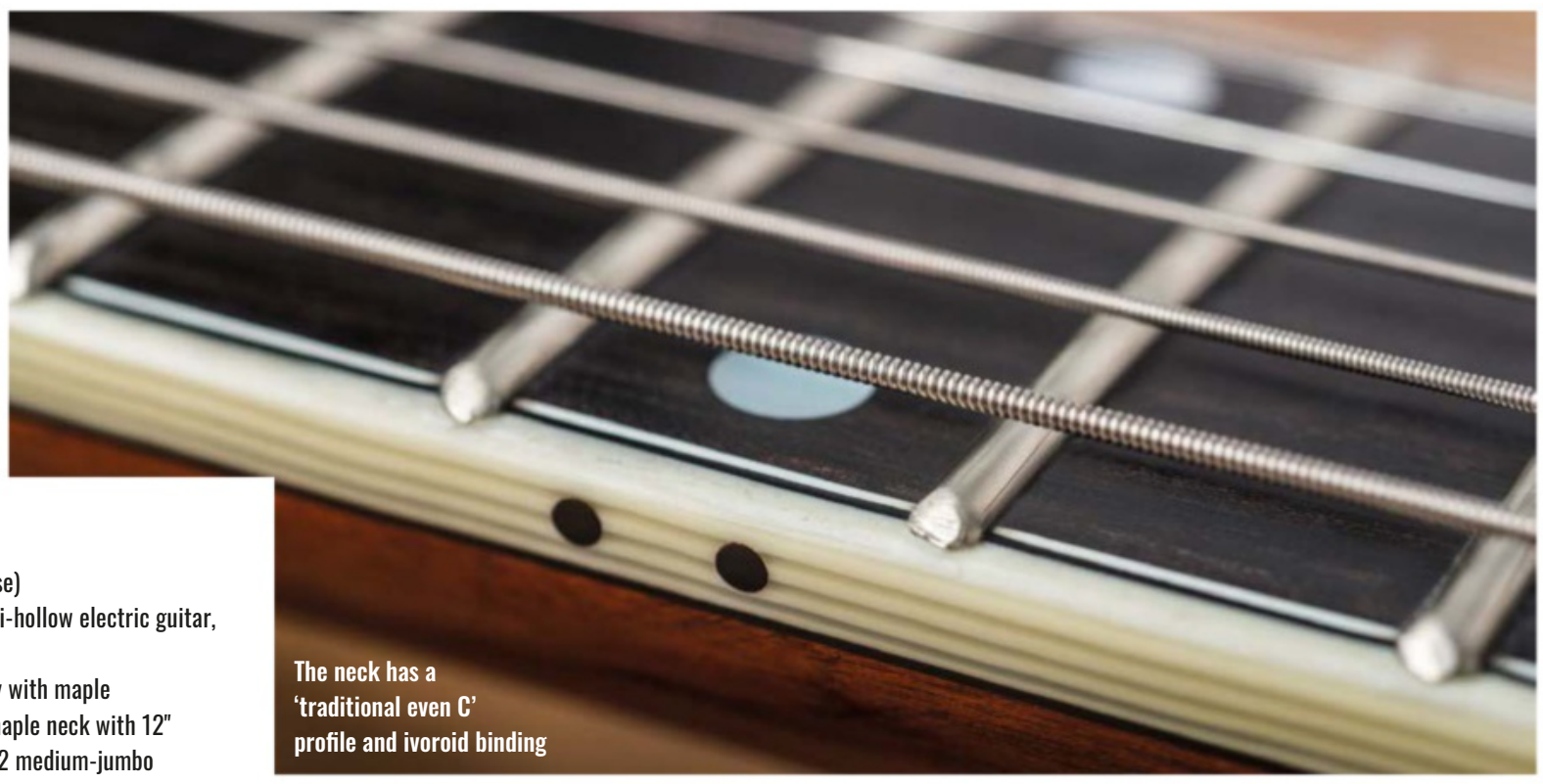
The gloss nitrocellulose finish is free of distress and has been buffed to a mirror sheen, but the vibe here is in no way sterile or inorganic.

Like the larger-bodied T59/V-RD that we reviewed earlier this year, the T484 features a pickguard hand-bound in grained ivoroid to match its neck and body binding and the bridge studs are screwed into bushings rather than directly into the body, vintage-style.

Eastman's new, slimmed-down headstock delivers an uninhibited string path behind the bone nut, while rather than the Gotoh machineheads we're used to seeing on Eastman pegheads, the T484 features Kluson-style tulip-button 14:1 tuners from Ping Well. Happily, we don't encounter any performance issues or indeed any unwanted pings as we tune up.

The elegant headstock offers a clean string path behind the nut


The T484 has the classic tune-o-matic and stop tailpiece combination


The neck has a 'traditional even C' profile and ivoroid binding

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £1,239 (inc. hard case)
DESCRIPTION Thinline semi-hollow electric guitar, made in China
BUILD Maple laminate body with maple centre-block, three-piece maple neck with 12" radius ebony fingerboard, 22 medium-jumbo Jescar 47104-P frets, bone nut. Ivoroid neck and body binding
HARDWARE Ping Well RM1239-N vintage-style tuners with tulip buttons, tune-o-matic bridge and stop tailpiece
ELECTRICS Seymour Duncan '59 (bridge) and Jazz (neck) humbuckers, 3-way toggle pickup selector, 2x volume, 2x tone with Sky MC 223 0.022uf capacitors
SCALE LENGTH 24.75"/629mm
NECK WIDTH 44.5mm at nut, 53.6mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 20.1mm at first fret, 23.3mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 37.2mm at nut, 51.7mm at bridge
WEIGHT 6.8lb/3.1kg
FINISH Classic gloss nitrocellulose
CONTACT Eastman Music Company
eastmanguitars.com

IN USE

Eastman's neck profiles are always appealing and the T484's 'traditional even C' easily passes the 'can you see the binding from the back?' test. This usually means there's a soft-shouldered carve that gets out of the way of your fretting hand and provides a comfortable playing experience – that's certainly the case here, although some will prefer the chunkier profiles elsewhere in the catalogue.

Its body may only be 14 inches wide, but the T484 projects like a cannon, with strummed acoustic chords eliciting a bold voice full of thinline ring and even, solidbody-like sustain. We've become accustomed to hearing Eastman guitars fitted with custom-voiced Lollar Imperials – and they do a great job of capturing that airiness we've all heard in great vintage-style humbucker tones – but the Seymour Duncans here are different animals.

Less complex and white-knuckle than some PAF-types, the Duncans offer a smoother ride, with cut-glass sophistication from the Jazz at the neck, and balanced compression from the '59 at the bridge. Seymour Duncan might not be as fashionable as your favourite boutique brand on Instagram, but the hugely experienced pickup maker knows how to get the job done.

There's plenty of versatility here, especially if you favour brighter Marshall/Vox/Blackface circuits over darker and more mid-rich tweeds, and the T484 makes an ideal transition model for solidbody players making their first leap through the f-hole.

8/10 **Excellent value, this compact semi mixes smooth tones with easy playability**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Gibson ES-339 Gloss **£1,699**, Ibanez Artstar Prestige AM200 **£2,049**, Epiphone ES-339 Pro **£369**

MARTIN
ROAD SERIES D-10E

WORDS JOSH GARDNER

With updated innards and subtle cosmetic enhancements, this electro-acoustic from Martin's mid-priced Road Series aims to be the ultimate touring companion…

Like the Mos Eisley cantina, the mid-priced acoustic market is crowded, cut-throat and full of imposing characters. Martin's Mexico-made Road Series is one of the more venerable names in the field, having first appeared all the way back in 2001, offering a stripped-down entry point for gigging guitarists.

In the 18 years since, Martin has periodically overhauled its Road Series instruments and the most recent fruits of Nazareth's labour can be found in this all-solid Sitka and sapele 14-fret dreadnought, the D-10E.

Aesthetically speaking, budget Martins have not always been the most dazzling, but while the D-10E's all-satin finish is a little spartan, the grain of the solid Sitka spruce top is rather nice, and the new pearl soundhole inlay and fret dots give it a cosmetic edge over its predecessor, the DRS2.

The D-10E actually shares plenty with the DRS2, including the use of Richlite for the bridge and fretboard, a 'Select Hardwood' (which we believe is Martin speak for Spanish cedar) neck and a HPL headstock veneer. Under the hood, however, there are some changes.

The old Road Series guitars made use of Fishman's Sonitone pickup system, but the MX-T system loaded into the D-10E is notable not just for its sonic performance, but by the inclusion of a built-in soundhole tuner – ideal for mid-gig adjustments.

IN USE

The Martin dreadnought sound is as iconic as it is familiar and the D-10E ticks all of the classic boxes. Although the tone was a touch on the bland side initially, the more we play it, the more warmth and character reveals itself – and it's going to keep getting better as you play out some of the stiffness.

And play it you'll want to – Martin's hand-rubbed Performing Artist neck is an effortless ride, and as you'd expect from a dreadnought, this is a guitar that loves to be hit hard. Especially with a pick, strummed chords leap out of the guitar with power and projection, without ever feeling too boomy or unbalanced.

Although it's not as sensitive as a dedicated unit, the onboard tuner proves its worth when it comes to altered tunings, with a bright, clear display that can be easily seen in any light. Less impressive are

The Fishman MX-T system has soundhole-mounted volume and tone controls

The D-10E has a Corian nut and chrome enclosed tuners

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £899 (inc soft-shell gigbag)
DESCRIPTION All-solid 6-string dreadnought electro-acoustic guitar. Made in Mexico
BUILD Solid Sitka spruce top, solid sapele back and sides, solid select hardwood neck, Richlite bridge and fingerboard, HPL headstock veneer; black-plastic body binding, pearloid soundhole rosette and dot markers; Corian nut, compensated Tusq saddle, chrome enclosed tuners
SCALE LENGTH 25.4"/645mm
NECK WIDTH 44mm at nut, 54mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 21mm at 1st fret, 24mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 35mm at nut, 55mm at bridge
WEIGHT 2.06kg/4.56lb
ELECTRONICS Fishman MX-T system with soundhole-mounted volume and tone controls plus soundhole tuner
LEFT HANDERS Yes
FINISH Natural satin top with satin Cherry back and sides, hand-rubbed neck
CONTACT Westside Distribution
westsidedistribution.com, martinguitar.com

the tuning machines themselves – they're not as responsive as we'd like, and their mass causes a fair bit of neck dive when the D-10E is strapped on.

The MX-T system offers volume and tone thumbwheels, delivering a perfectly respectable and usable replication of the guitar's tone, with very little of the plasticky quackiness that can plague the sound of cheaper systems.

This might not be the cheapest all-solid electro on the market, but it sounds, looks, feels and indeed *is* every inch a Martin – all for less than half the price of a D-18. With a robust gigbag also included in the package, the D-10E is the perfect performance foil for those who like their acoustics with real pedigree.

8/10 **Clean looks, classic Martin sounds – the D-10E is truly one for the road**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Taylor Academy Series 10E **£659**, Sigma SDM-18E+ **£649**, Eastman E1D **£499**

The soundhole-mounted tuner will come to your rescue during performance

KEMPER
PROFILER STAGE

WORDS DARRAN CHARLES

Guitar EDITOR'S CHOICE

Kemper has changed the game for gigging guitarists once already. Can packing its powerful profiling technology into a roadworthy floor unit repeat the trick? Step this way…

With Line 6's Helix and Fractal's AX8 released in 2015 and 2016 respectively, Kemper is the last of the digital modelling world's 'big three' to arrive at the floorboard party. It may be a case of 'better late than never', especially if the revolutionary features of the flagship head and rack versions translate to the Profiler Stage.

Any piece of equipment designed for live use needs to be able to withstand the rigours of the road and the Profiler Stage's sturdy chassis looks up to the challenge, while still retaining the existing versions' control-panel layout, which attempts to visually represent a physical signal chain.

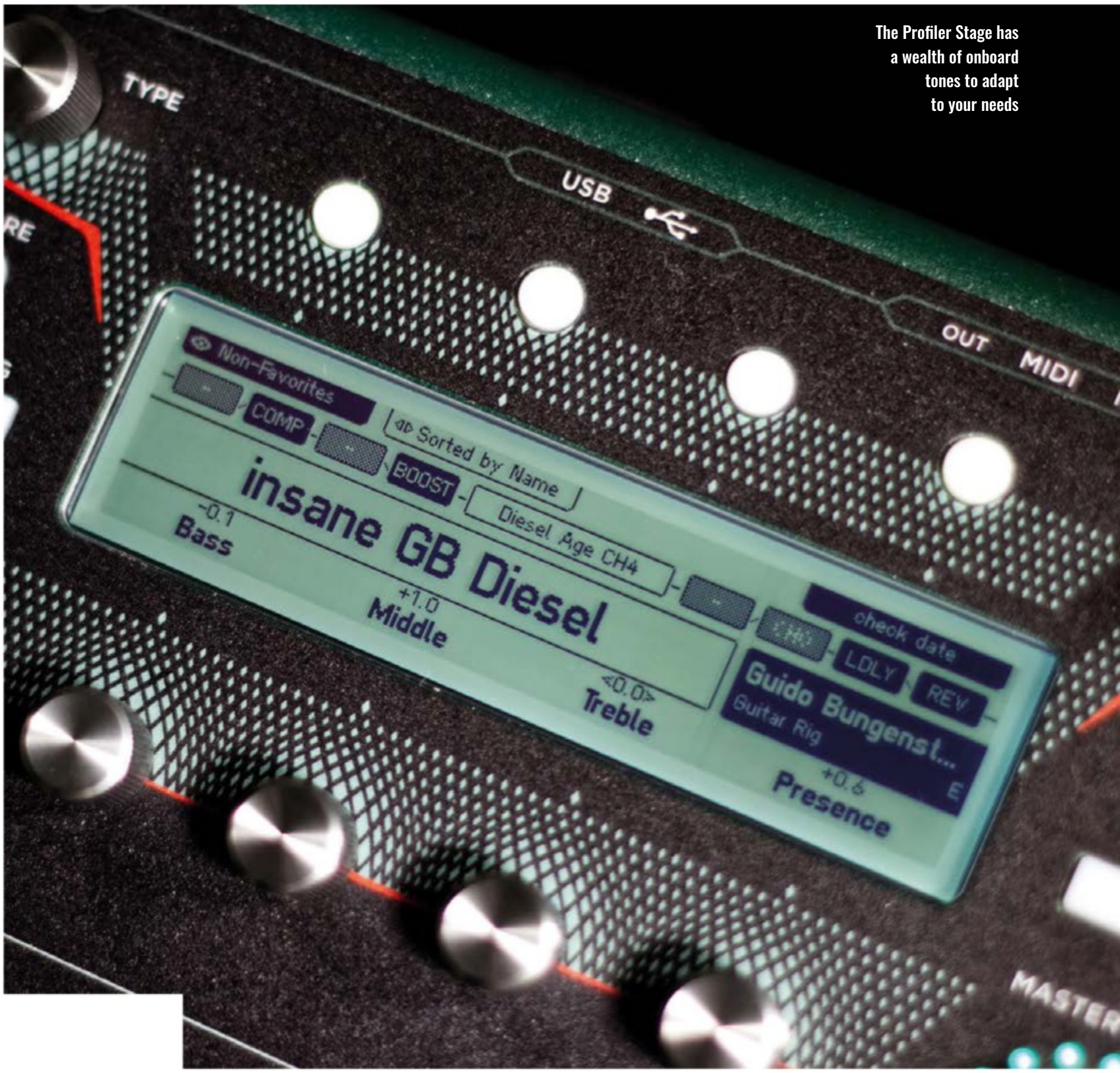
On the right-hand side of the unit beneath the looper and tuner footswitches is a strip of buttons. The pair in the centre labelled 'amplifier' and 'cabinet' represent your virtual stack. From left to right, the input button (representing your guitar input) is followed by four soft buttons labelled A to D, to which you assign those effects that normally feature before the preamp, such as distortion, wah-wah and volume effects.

Between the 'cabinet' and 'output' button on the right are a further four buttons that simulate a virtual effects loop and thus are reserved for effects such as delay, reverb and modulation.

The foot-controller section of the Profiler Stage is practically identical to Kemper's Profiler Remote footswitch unit. Two rows of six buttons are arranged to provide bank switching, patch switching and effects assignment, with a dedicated tap tempo thrown in for good measure. Switches one through five are where individual 'rigs' (amps, cab, and pedal setups) are stored and the up- and down-arrowed footswitches immediately above them are used to scroll through the 125 banks.

There are two usage modes: 'Browser' and 'Performance'. In Browser mode, you can flick through hundreds of included rig profiles, from vintage Fenders to aggressive Diezels and everything in between.

Performance mode is where you determine how the various footswitches are set. A popular template is to opt for switches one to five to transition from clean to several shades of mean, but it's up to you. For each rig, you can also assign specific effects to the row of footswitches marked I-IV. For example, if one of your



The Profiler Stage has a wealth of onboard tones to adapt to your needs

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £1,450
DESCRIPTION Digital amp/cab/effects modeller. Made in China
CONTROLS 14 footswitches including dedicated looper and tuner, 6 endless rotary coders, 29 soft buttons, gain, master volume
REAR PANEL 1/4" mono instrument input, 2x FX send, 4x FX return, stereo XLR out, stereo 1/4" jack main outputs, stereo 1/4" jack monitor outputs, S/PDIF in/out, 1/4" jack pedal inputs, MIDI In/Out; 2x USB connectors, IEC mains socket
DIMENSIONS 470 x 850 x 260mm
WEIGHT 4.6kg/10.1lb
CONTACT Kemper
kemper-amps.com

rig's presets has an overdrive pedal in the chain, you can assign this to one of these switches and toggle it on and off as desired.

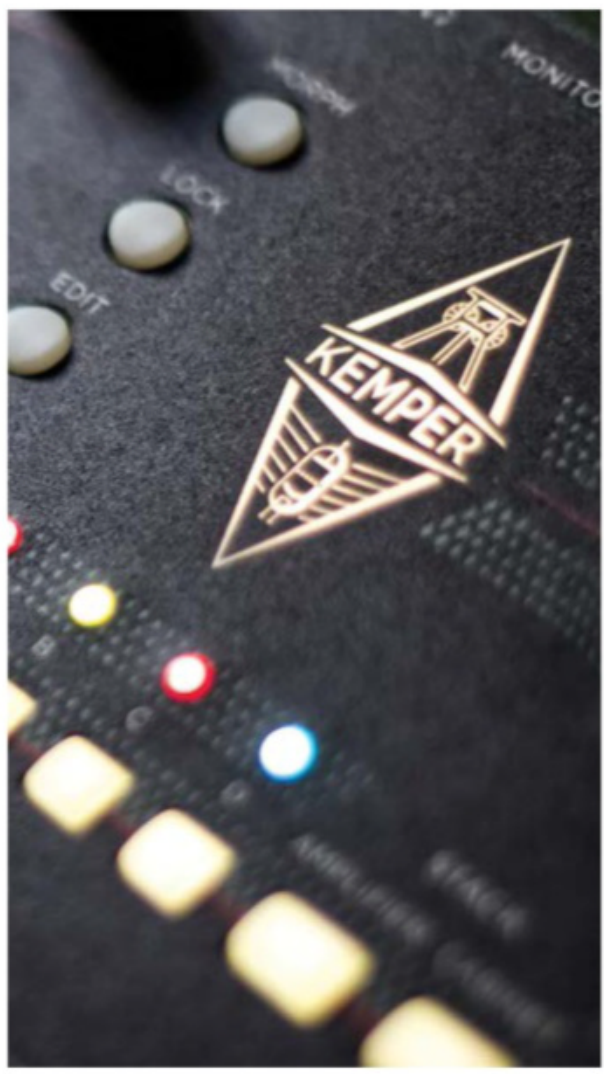
The edit menu is straightforward enough to use, but the small screen seems a little 'old tech' compared to some of the competition. Although Kemper offers its computer-based Rig Manager software – via which it's possible to browse and audition rigs in greater detail – it's not editing software per se, as editing parameters must still be carried out via the floorboard itself.

We're not alone in hoping that app-based editing over Bluetooth isn't too far down the line – Eventide's H9 Control app is a great example of how this can be both time-saving and encourage creativity in real-world scenarios.

The Stage's main output can be sent to the PA via a stereo pair of either quarter-inch jack or XLR connectors, while an additional monitor output (via another pair of quarter-inch jack sockets) is designed to be fed either to an onstage monitor/FRFR amp or your in-ear monitoring system. The signals can be set independently, so you can adjust your monitor level without affecting the signal routed to the front of house.

IN USE

With the wealth of profiles onboard, the almost limitless number available for download and the ability to make your own, it's nigh-on impossible not to stumble upon a sound that will inspire you. However, in our experience, to get the best out of the Kemper – if you are not planning on



profiling your own equipment – it's good to have an idea of the amplifiers you *want* to hear, rather than aimlessly scrolling through hundreds of rigs.

This was something of a eureka moment for us – it was at that point we began to appreciate exactly the wealth of tones at our fingertips. On the lookout for Plexi-style sounds, we find those onboard both eerily accurate and utterly inspiring. On the advice of our esteemed editor, we download a 5E3 Deluxe profile and its tweedy goodness leads us into jazzier territory, while the stunning Michael Britt profiles of a Ceriatone Dumble clone help us tap into our inner SRV.

Quite simply, any sound you want is either at your fingertips, or available for download from a third party. That said, it's important to remember these sounds are digital snapshots of a specific setting of a mic'd amp and not models of amplifier circuits – as such, they rarely stand up to extreme EQ and gain alterations.

As thousands of working musicians have discovered, the benefits of using a digital modelling system live are indisputable and can eventually become indispensable. All your sounds can be auditioned and pre-loaded in a pre-programmed foot controller (including any level changes or solo boosts). They can then run straight into the PA every night, without being at the mercy of intangibles such as venue acoustics or a sound engineer that isn't familiar with your music, or hates music altogether.

In addition, the lag between patch changes on the Kemper Stage is virtually non-existent, making it possible to switch from a crystal-clean Fender-style tone to a screaming hot Dual Rectifier without even a momentary dropout. It's something that some of the competition can't boast – and a big plus for players who rely on quiet/loud dynamic shifts.

If you're thinking about switching from analogue to digital, the ease of transition the Kemper Profiler Stage offers – not to mention the compact and practical form factor – means there's never been a better time to embrace modernity. Like countless others, you are unlikely to regret it.

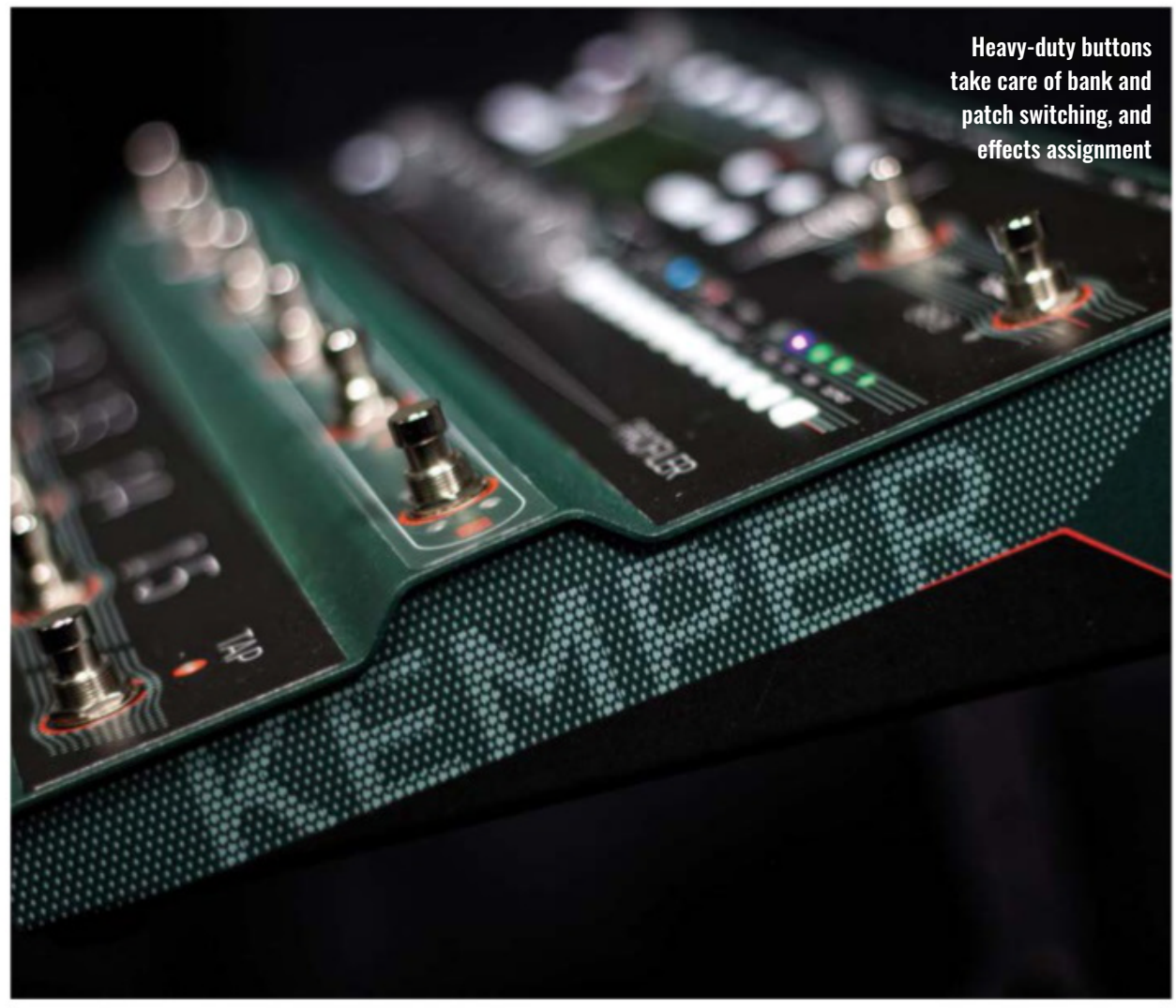
9/10 **All of Kemper's revolutionary profiling technology in a compact floor unit**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Fractal Audio FM3 **€1,300**, Line 6 Helix **£1,199**, Atomic AmpliFIRE 12 **£799**

Tuner and tap tempo add to the Stage's performance credentials

The rear panel houses FX sends and an array of connectivity options



Heavy-duty buttons take care of bank and patch switching, and effects assignment

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BEETRONICS
SWARM

WORDS RICHARD PURVIS

The insect-loving Californian effect-maker's latest luxury fuzz pedal, with added harmonies and synth-like modulation, threatens to be its noisiest creation yet

In our recent review of the Beetronics Overhive and Buzzter, we concluded that both pedals were great, but expressed a preference for this US maker's wilder, fuzzier creations. So how about a box that, by Beetronics' own description, "sounds like a thousand killer bees coming to get you"? Should be extreme enough, eh?

In slightly more technical terms, the Swarm is a fuzz that turns your signal into a brutal square wave, then adds analogue harmonies – above, below or both – and extreme frequency modulation. The central 'species' switch sets the harmony interval, while the other knobs let you adjust the relative levels of your three sonic components and control just how freakily the added parts are modulated.

This is part of the Royal Series, which basically means it looks really smart and hasn't had Beetronics' usual 'kicked around a car park by some gorillas' treatment.

Like the Buzzter, it has a moody black enclosure with stylish metallic highlights and feels solid enough to survive at least three apocalypses.

IN USE

With pedals like this, it can be fun to just plug in, hit the footswitch and play a big old E chord without even checking how the controls are set. In the case of our Swarm, the result is an absolutely satanic racket – and we're not complaining.

It's a complicated device, but there are two key things to know from the off. First, the fuzz is thick, sweet and aggressively gated; and second, the modulation of the harmonies is never anything less than insane. But before anyone gets sonically stung to death, let's take a step back and try to work our way through this thing methodically.

If you turn the two uppermost chickenheads down to zero, you've actually got a straight fuzz pedal on your hands – albeit one with two output-level controls and nothing else. This fixed fuzz tone is as huge and mellifluous as Beetronics' best, and the extra-crackly gating effects are a lot of fun as long as you don't mind kissing goodbye to any kind of sustain.

Now we dial in some harmonies and the really barmy stuff begins. It can sound almost like a standard octave fuzz at certain settings, but there's an unpredictable

The nine-way 'species' switch sets the harmony interval

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £269
DESCRIPTION Analogue fuzz and harmoniser pedal with frequency modulation. Made in USA
CONTROLS Nine-way species (harmony interval) switch; worker (fuzz), queen (high harmony) and drone (low harmony) levels, flight (modulation response) and sting (modulation rate); master volume
FEATURES True bypass; powered by 9-volt mains supply only (not included)
DIMENSIONS 145 x 103 x 66mm
CONTACT FACE
face.be, beetronicsfx.com

element to the tracking that, combined with the sputtery nature of the fuzz itself, means you're effectively playing a duet: you on one side, the semi-random whims of the pedal on the other.

There also seems to be an envelope-following filter at work in the first few positions of the species switch, adding a vocal effect that ups the bonkers factor even further.

But it's the pitch-mangling modulation that makes this pedal one for the hardcore noisemongers – it soars, swoops, whines and whoops, while you're playing and sometimes even after you've stopped. If you want your guitar to sound like two analogue synths having a punch-up in a pub toilet – but in a good way – then this might be just the job. Extreme enough, then? Yeah, pretty much. **G**

8/10 **A box of chaos with honey-sweet fuzz at its core**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Dwarfcraft Devices Witch Shifter **£249**,
EarthQuaker Devices Bit Commander **£169**,
Blackout Effectors Fix'd Fuzz Deluxe **£189**

Part of the Royal Series, the Swarm has a smart aesthetic

EARTHQUAKER DEVICES
PLUMES

WORDS RICHARD PURVIS

Guitar EDITOR'S CHOICE

When EarthQuaker launches a new overdrive based on the legendary Ibanez TS808 Tube Screamer, you know it's going to be more than just a straight tribute to the ubiquitous green machine…

First came the Palisades, a multi-mode overdrive from EarthQuaker Devices that took the classic Tube Screamer sound and added lashings of tonal versatility. Then came the Dunes, a stripped-down version designed to be easier on both the pedalboard and the wallet. And now comes the Plumes, which is… a bit confusing, at least initially.

While this is the only one of those three pedals that's actually green – step one in the 'how to build a Screamer' manual – a number of design choices on the inside, including JFET op-amps and much higher input impedance, mean it's actually heading a little further away from the sonic source than its predecessors. Or maybe more than a little.

The Plumes may lack the switching flexibility of its big brothers, but we're promised a more refined core tone instead – with more chime, more clarity and lower noise than a standard TS-type. And it's not purely a three-knob thumper: a single toggle switch in the middle lets you flip between three different clipping modes.

There's also a 'reimagined' EQ circuit, plus EarthQuaker's clever Flexi-Switch tech – if you hold down the footswitch, it goes back to bypass when you release it – handy if your egomaniac lead singer only lets you play lead for two bars at a time.

IN USE

There are four things that happen when you stomp on a Tube Screamer (five, if you include the little light coming on). There's a cut to the bottom end, a bump in the upper mids, a softening of the transient spikes and, of course, some nice low/medium-gain overdrive. The Plumes provides a super-sized portion of number four, but the rest is more complicated.

With tone at halfway, you get a tightening up of the bass and a moderate midrange boost, but the top end is wide open – there's little compression here to blunt the attack of fierce single coils. The result can be very likeable, especially with an already overdriven amp, but it's not forgiving.

The nature of the drive itself depends on how you set that toggle switch. Mode one is symmetrical clipping with a pair of LEDs and has a Marshall-like boldness with plenty of power on tap; mode two is op-amp drive with no diodes and swaps some of that gain for extra clarity and headroom; and mode three, with asymmetrical silicon diodes, is as

Plumes features a three-way clipping mode mini-toggle

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £105
DESCRIPTION Overdrive pedal. Made in USA
CONTROLS Level, tone, gain, three-way clipping mode switch
FEATURES Flexi-Switch latching or non-latching footswitch; true bypass; powered by 9-volt mains supply only (not included)
DIMENSIONS 126 x 66 x 57mm
CONTACT EarthQuaker Devices
earthquakerdevices.com

close as the Plumes gets to the soft-edged squishiness of the classic TS sound.

The tone control tames top end without getting woolly – it sounds lovely at zero – but there's no way of pushing the mids without also sharpening up treble. That's where the Plumes reveals itself to be, essentially, not a Tube Screamer. It's a fine overdrive in its own right, but you just have to pretend it isn't green.

9/10 **Not a strict Tube Screamer clone, just a terrific mids-focused OD**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

JHS Pedals The Bonsai **£219**, Cusack Screamer **£185**, Walrus Audio Warhorn **£177**

The Deep Six aims to blend the sound of classic studio compressors with the simplicity of a stompbox

WALRUS AUDIO
DEEP SIX COMPRESSOR V3

Guitar EDITOR'S CHOICE

WORDS MICHAEL WATTS

Looking for studio-quality dynamics in stompbox format? Walrus Audio has you covered with the latest version of the Deep Six compressor

With their comparatively subtle effect on the response of an instrument, compressors don't always top guitarists' shopping list. The same can't be said for recording engineers and producers, however, for whom the compressor is a vital tool worthy of meaningful investment. While compression is a more nuanced effect than a germanium fuzz, for example, it can make your guitar stand out in the mix as well as adding sustain and colour.

Traditionally, compressors have found most favour within genres that demand a clean sound, such as funk, country… even Congolese Soukous. Walrus Audio, based in Norman, Oklahoma, has just released the third iteration of its Deep Six compressor with some new tweaks.

IN USE

With the Deep Six at the front of our chain and a selection of instruments to hand, we begin with a Gibson Les Paul resplendent with full-fat humbuckers. All knobs at noon, we find the Deep Six immediately adds presence, sustain and detail to arpeggiated and strummed chords with very little in the way of extraneous noise. It's a good start.

Traditionally, an LP would probably not be the first choice for a clean, compressed sound as humbuckers are almost guaranteed to lead to some fairly upsetting clipping and distortion. The Deep Six, however, features blend and attack knobs which help to keep things pristine even at more extreme settings. Wiry funk doublestops on a Les Paul neck pickup? Now you can!

Turning to the more socially acceptable selection of a Telecaster, followed closely by a Strat, allows the Deep Six to play to its strengths, emphasising the character of each guitar. Our overwound Tele bridge pickup retains its grunt, but with added energy – and the typically underwhelming neck pickup gets a rare shot of character, elevating it above the norm.

The Strat is perhaps the guitar most likely to receive the compressor treatment in the wild and the Deep Six makes ours even more snappy and delicious across all pickup positions. Nile Rodgers would approve.

Adding some post-compression grit is especially rewarding, as there's enough poke via the level knob to push an overdrive pedal up a notch. With the sustain control pinned, we're rewarded with an almost violin-like voice. This could work for any genre from fusion to shoegaze via math-

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £179
DESCRIPTION Hand-wired studio-quality compressor pedal. Made in the USA
CONTROLS Level, tone, sustain, blend, attack, bypass footswitch
FEATURES True-bypass switching
DIMENSIONS 64mm x 52mm x 120mm
CONTACT FACE
face.be, walrusaudio.com

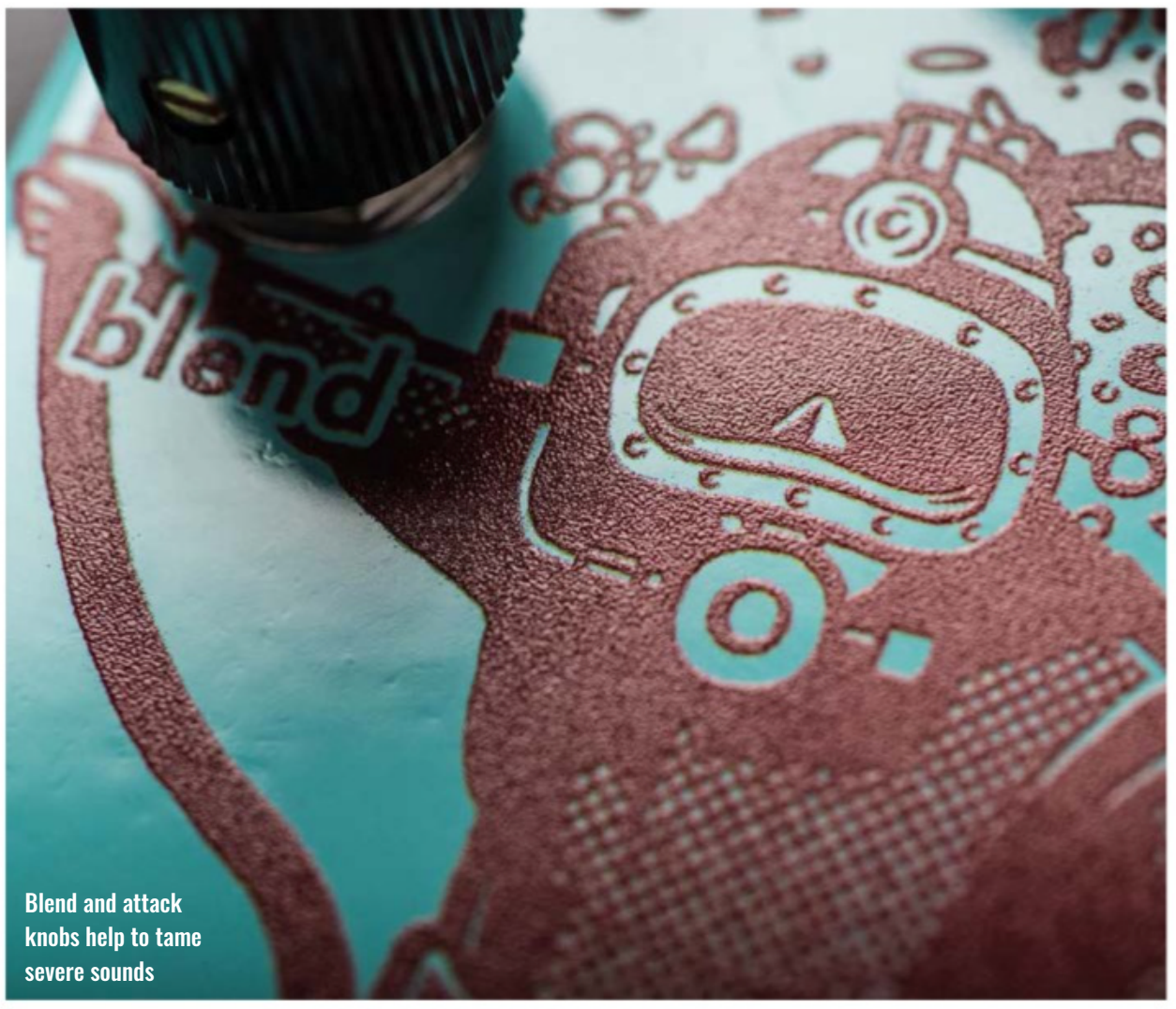
rock (Strandberg wranglers of the Yvette Young school will find a new fluidity to tapping ideas here) without bottoming out.

By aiming to combine the performance of a Universal Audio 1176 with the ease of use of the Ross and Dyna Comp pedals, Walrus Audio has created a beautifully musical and versatile compressor that can either lovingly caress or stamp the snot out of your guitar's ADSR envelope, in the name of instrumental expression and fun.

9/10 **A beautifully made and elegantly articulate studio-quality compressor**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Xotic SP Compressor **£119**, Orange Kongpressor **£109**, MXR Dyna Comp **£89**



Blend and attack knobs help to tame severe sounds

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SOME KIND OF MONSTER

WORDS ADAM BOWDEN-SMITH

No, you are not seeing some kind of printing error; this double-neck banjo/guitar behemoth really does exist. Read on to find out how and why the Countrymaster came to be…

Brad Paisley… It's all Brad Paisley's fault. You can blame him for the existence of this beast, if you find the need to blame anyone. When I first heard Paisley's music I knew I liked it, but it was when I heard *The Best Thing That I Had Goin'* that I was smitten.

I think it's officially my favourite song ever, having listened to it probably 10 times a day since I first heard it a few years ago. It contains many of my favourite musical elements: bluegrass, country, cracking guitar licks and… banjo. And, as is my way, I decided I wanted to play it in a band. I wanted to play banjo over the bluegrass intro and guitar in the rest of the song.

My initial idea was to sling my Tele behind my back, Springsteen-style, and play banjo for the first verse and chorus, before casting the banjo aside and grabbing the Tele for the remainder of the tune.

But this of course presents many problems… not least that I don't have the luxury of a guitar tech to grab the discarded banjo. So some dark part of my mind happened upon the idea of two instruments in one. Not unusual in itself: the 12-string/six-string combo is firmly embedded in rock 'n' roll history, and mandolin/guitar double-necks are relatively frequent visitors to the country-music scene. But a banjo/guitar pairing? I'd not seen one. Is it possible? Could it be? *Should* it be??

The nail in the coffin was when I happened upon a band whose banjoist was plucking upon an electric banjo. I've seen these before, but this particular one had a small six-inch banjo head (the drum-like skin under the bridge, traditionally 11 inches in diameter) which would not be unwieldy on a double-neck body. I basked in a brief light that yes, it *would* be possible!

THE DRAWING BOARD

Stage one involved many hours of Googling and just plain, good old-fashioned thinking. How the hell was this going to work? The more I thought, the more details cropped up – neck angles, bridge height, string tension, string break angle, pickups, wiring… the list went on.

First things first – I drew an image of what was in my head. To keep it simple, I wanted a single-pickup Tele on the bottom half (or Esquire, technically) and the banjo was to have a single pickup, too. That way, I could keep the controls to a simple, Tele-style set up: one three-way switch to select either/both pickups.

I pondered the electrics for some time before enlisting the help of guitarelectronics.com to draw me a wiring diagram. Result: volume and tone per pickup (on stacked pots) feeding each pickup to a separate output (guitar to amp, banjo to PA) and a three-way switch as described above.

Next up: sourcing that small banjo head. This was a deal-breaker. If I couldn't find the right thing, the project would fall on its arse. I had wondered about taking a banjolele and removing the neck, then somehow installing the whole 'pot' (banjo

head assembly) into the guitar, but this felt unnecessarily cumbersome.

The answer lay on eBay (doesn't it always?). I found an early 20th-century banjolin (banjo-mandolin hybrid) with a six-inch pot that simply dropped into a circular cavity and screwed in from the top. Perfect – I could rout out a hole in a solid guitar and drop it in!

But what about the neck? Luckily, I have a chum who's a banjo player and all banjo players have a 'banjo guy'. So I ended up in an industrial unit in a back street of Camden in the workshop of John Alvey Turner. I explained my requirements to Philip (current proprietor) and he rummaged in a hessian bag of necks and drew out an old Vega piece (or possibly a high-quality repro) and said: 'Like this?'"

"Yes," I said, "just like that." It was a short-scale, four-string tenor banjo neck, maybe 100 years old, with an ebony 'board and beautiful rosewood overlay on the headstock. I also liked the star inlays. I had thought of getting a five-string neck, but

FACING PAGE The banjo-Tele double-neck's body was created with the help of Telecaster templates and the author's carpenter friend, Ricky

THIS PAGE The body was routed and the 'pot' from a banjolin (banjo-mandolin hybrid) sourced on eBay was dropped into the circular cavity and screwed in

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Featured

Fender 1978 American Telecaster

- Circa 1978
- 3 Piece Ash Body
- Rosewood Fingerboard
- Re-fretted
- Rewound Original Pickups
- Weight: 9lb 8.8oz

Pre-owned
£1,599

Here is a rare beauty! A pre-owned 1978 Fender American Telecaster. Finished in Natural, this guitar has a beautifully matched 3 piece Ash body. Believed to be all original, this guitar features its original 3 saddle bridge, with original pickups. The guitar features some nice in keeping upgrades, including a Re-Fret and Pickup Rewind of the original pickups. Both have been expertly done and only improve an already fantastic guitar.
This Tele is in fantastic condition for its age. As to be expected there are some marks and dings, however these are all cosmetic and do not detract from the guitar. see photos above.
Included is also the original Fender Hard Case.
It comes professionally setup with a 3 month warranty.

Recent arrivals..

Epiphone 2009 Les Paul Ultra II
Finished in Faded Cherry. Hybrid Acoustic / Electric Guitar Design. Dual Humbucking Pickups & Shadow acoustic pickup. Hard Case

Epiphone Popa Chubby Korina Flying V
Made in 2001 in Korea. Korina Body. Maple Neck with Rosewood fingerboard. P90 Pick-ups. Includes Hard Case. Photos Online.

Ovation C2078AXP-AF Elite Plus
Finished in Okoume Feather. Unique Lyra-chord Back & Sides. Deep Contour Body Design. Built in Pickup System. Hard Case.

Jackson Misha Mansoor Juggernaut
HT7. Pro Series Signature Model. 7 String. Finished in Neon Orange. MM1 Pickups. Cara-melised Maple Fingerboard with Flat Radius.

Gibson 2016 SJ-200 Vintage
SJ22VNGH1. Thermally Aged Adirondack Red Spruce Top. Maple B&S. Rosewood finger-board. LR Baggs Pickup. Hard Case & Docs.

Gibson 2011 Dove
Sitka Spruce Top. Maple Back & Sides with Flame. 3 Piece Maple Neck. Nitrocellulose finish. Includes original Gibson Hard Case.

Gibson 1990 Advanced Jumbo
Finished in Vintage Sunburst. Based on origi-nal 1930s model. Spruce Top with Rosewood Back & Sides. Built in Fishman Pickup. Case.

PRS SE Angelus Limited Edition
Figured Koa Burst Back & Sides. Solid Spruce Top. Mahogany Neck with Ebony Finger-board. Built in Fishman Pickup. Hard Case.

Fender 2003 Victor Bailey Jazz Bass
Koa & Rosewood over Mahogany Body. Rose-wood fingerboard. Fender SCN Noiseless pickups. Active EQ. Hard Case. Photos Online.

Rickenbacker 4003 (Midnight Blue)
Brand New. A classic Ricki Design. 20 Frets. Rosewood fingerboard. Maple Body with through neck. Includes Hard Case.

Fender Jaco Pastorius Jazz Bass
Fretless bass. Signature Model. American Vintage Pickups. C Shape Neck. Nitrocellulose Sunburst finish. Includes Hard Case.

Fender Vintera 60s Jazz Bass
Finished in Daphne Blue. Alder Body. Dual 60s Style Single Coil Pickups. Vintage Radius Fingerboard. Includes Padded Gig Bag.

Taylor 814CE Grand Auditorium
Circa 2011. Made in El Cajon, USA. Rare Sun-burst Finish. Spruce Top. Rosewood Back & Sides. Expression Pickup. Hard Case & Docs.

Taylor 412e Grand Concert
Solid Sitka Spruce Top. Solid Ovangkol Back & Sides. Built in Taylor Expression 2 Pickup System. With Original Hard Case and Docs.

Taylor 524e Grand Auditorium
All Mahogany. Built in Expression 2 Pickup System. Made from Tropical Mahogany. Ebony Fingerboard. Original hardcase & docs.

Hofner 456 / 457 Archtop
Circa 1960-62. Three Pickups (recently rewound). Believed to be all original. Great condition for its age.

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I figured I'd be flat-picking anyway (because of the guitar element), so I opted for a four-string, tuned to G, as on a five-string.

GOING TO WORK

This old banjo neck was destined to be sullied: I sawed off the heel to make it a bolt-on neck. But I did keep the rosewood heel cap to use as a neck plate. Being old, the hide glue melted easily with an iron and a damp tea towel, removing the cap with no damage.

For the Tele side, I acquired a neck from a Fender Baja Tele – a wonderful fat thing with a soft V shape to it, 9.5-inch radius and medium-jumbo frets.

Next biggie: building the body. I've built guitars before, but always from parts. I've never had to build a body from scratch. I found a company that sold timber intended for guitar building and it selected the lightest slab of swamp ash it had for me. After having it planed and squared, I enlisted the help of my friend Ricky, a fine carpenter, who cut the slab in half and glued it together to form a body blank.

I used a Tele template for the bottom half of the body, but the top half was all freestyle. With the help of a set of French curves and compasses, I finalised the design and created a cardboard template.

Using this template, Ricky cut out the body shape for me. I then smoothed off the edges before heading back to his place to utilise his routing skills. Again, I had Tele templates for the bottom half, but the top was all freestyle.

HOME BREW

From this point, everything was relatively as you'd expect – it went together like any Tele-type home build, much to my surprise. I had fully expected to encounter issues on the banjo side with the neck angle and the bridge height, but everything was great straight away.

I had sourced some hardware from the Camden industrial unit: a bridge, tailpiece, vintage tuners, all of which did exactly the job required of them. Once I had roughed together the parts, I was able to draw a template for the pickguard, which I had made with a fine tortoiseshell pattern by Scratch-It! (originalscratchplates.com).

For the finish, my original intention had been to give this already ostentatious beast a silver-sparkle paint job, with a pearloid pickguard, but the grain of the ash was so

THIS PAGE The hybrid features a Fender Mando-Strat pickup and a HandBender unit sourced from Sweden

THIS SPREAD The unholy hybrid, in all its glory – and since it sounds like a great Tele and an electric banjo rolled into one, it's more than fit for purpose – playing Brad Paisley's *The Best Thing That I Had Goin'*

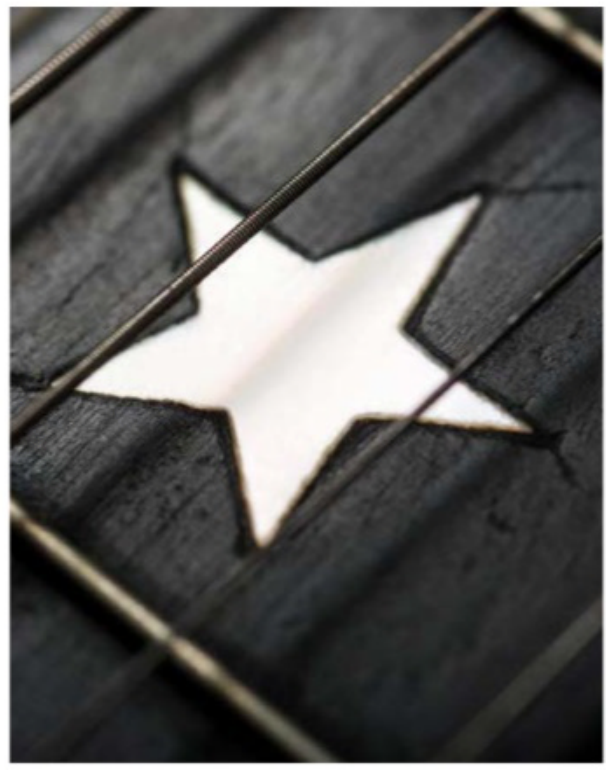
nice I felt it a crime to cover it up. Wood stain was the way forward: I selected a shade similar to Fender's Surf Green (actually called 'Beach Hut Blue') and felt the tortie 'guard would complement this nicely. The woodstain was sealed in with a satin varnish for a subtle sheen.

The pickup-selection process was reasonably straightforward: a Fender American Vintage pickup for the Tele bridge position and a Fender Mando-Strat pickup for the banjo (single coil with four pole pieces under the cover). I had toyed (and still am toying) with the idea of an acoustic banjo pickup in the bridge or under the skin of the banjo, but a magnetic pickup is simpler and so more suited to this most experimental of projects.

The Tele bridge is your common-or-garden vintage Tele unit with three brass saddles (notched to keep the strings from butting up against the grub screws), but I augmented it with a B-bender from handbendersweden.com – a retrofit item that bends the second (B) string up a tone in the accepted Nashville manner, without requiring a lot of heavy gubbins being routed into the back of the guitar. Thus was the birth of the Countrymaster.

IT'S ALIVE!

And how does it sound? Well, the Tele half sounds amazing! If you think of that massive chunk of swamp ash working in cahoots with the thick neck and the brass



saddles, that Fender pickup delivers proper Tele tone by the bucketload – but somehow thicker and bigger.

The banjo half sounds… like a banjo! Albeit an electric one – again, the addition of a piezo or similar pickup would make it more 'authentic', but for live use (and for avoiding feedback), it does the job admirably.

I had to swap the vintage banjo tuners for modern, geared ones – to maintain some semblance of stable tuning – and the addition of an earth wire from the bridge of the Tele to the banjo tailpiece was necessary, but these were the only mods required after completion.

All in all, an educational, enjoyable, sometimes stressful, all the time unbelievable experience that I'm not sure I'd embark upon again, but will at no point regret! I'm incredibly proud of my design and the end result – and I will own and gig the beast until I am no longer able to… G

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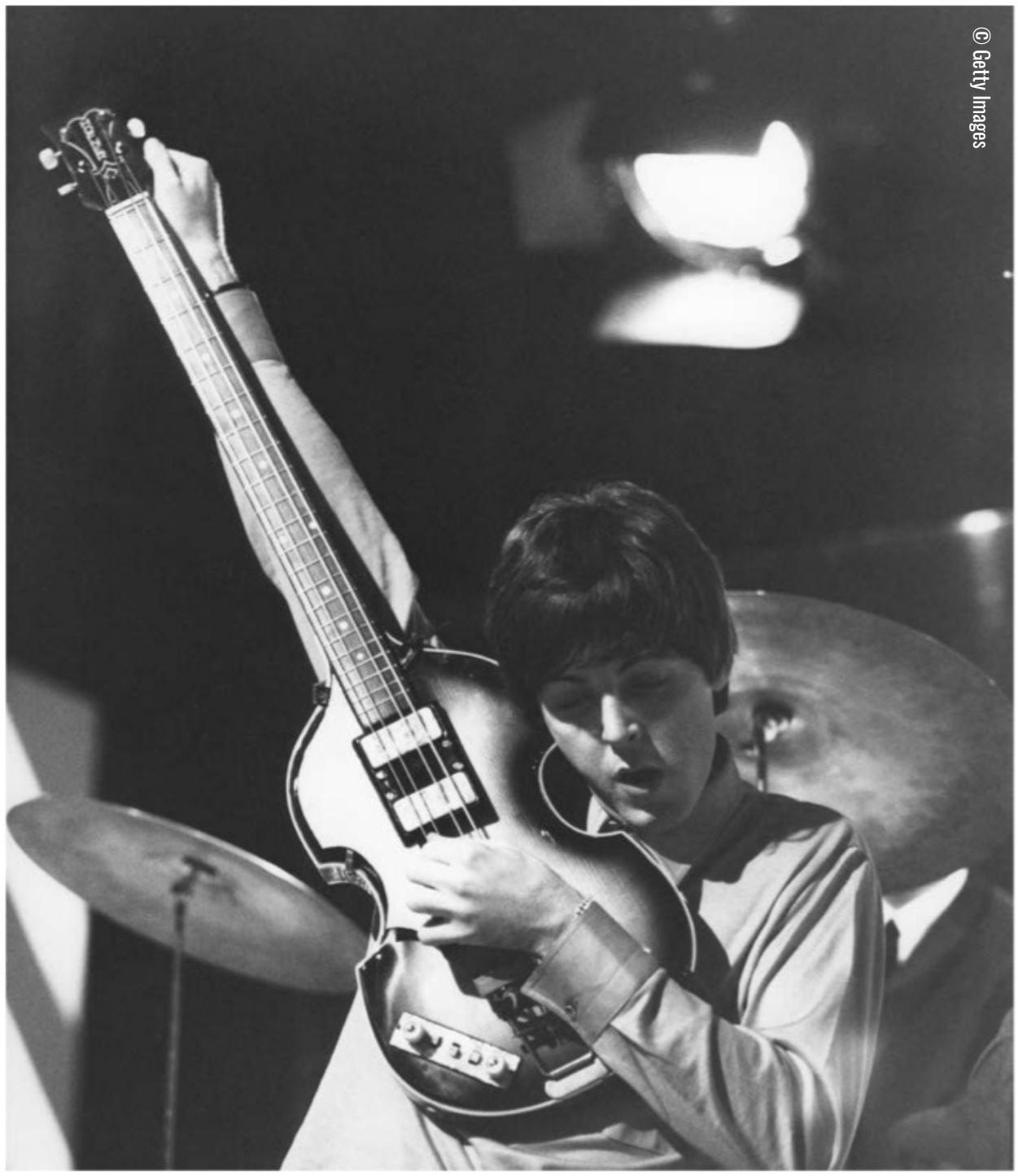
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THE SECRETS OF PLAYING IN TUNE

WORDS MICHAEL ROSS

Being in tune is about the most basic requirement of any musician, yet you won't meet a guitarist who hasn't at some point struggled to get their guitar to stay in tune, no matter how good they are. Tuning issues can also be the most frustrating thing for a guitar player to wrestle with, whether you're on stage, in the studio, or just jamming at home – but never fear, help is at hand. This guide gives you all the tips and tricks you'll need to get in tune and stay there…

Though no one is actually hiding this information, for me, learning the 'secrets' to performing in tune has been a gradual process of discovery over half a century of playing, repairing and reviewing guitars. It involves getting the instrument in tune, staying in tune, playing in tune and more. Each is essential to turning in a live performance and/or recording that is easy on the ears.

GETTING IN TUNE

Tuning is simple, right? You turn the tuners on your guitar until your electronic tuner shows each string is in tune and voila! Well, no. For that to work, you need an instrument that is 'intonated', meaning the distance from the nut to the bridge is correct for each string.

This is easily sorted. Play the harmonic and then the actual note at the 12th fret for each string. They should be exactly the same pitch. You can determine this with a tuner or your ear (if it is very good). If the note is higher than the harmonic, use a small screwdriver to move the saddle away from the nut. This makes the string longer and the note lower (without changing the harmonic). Trial and error will bring you to a point where they are the same. Conversely, if the note is lower, moving the saddle towards the nut, thus shortening the string, will raise its pitch until it matches the harmonic.

AS YOUR STRINGS GET OLDER, YOUR INTONATION MAY FALTER, BUT REPLACING THE STRINGS WITH A NEW SET SHOULD PUT THE GUITAR BACK INTO PROPER INTONATION

Be sure to do this with new strings, else when you swap the old ones for new, things may change. As your strings get older, your intonation may falter, but replacing the strings with a new set should put the guitar back into proper intonation. Unevenly worn frets can also affect intonation, so you may need a fret dressing or, if there's not enough fret left, fret job to insure proper intonation.

So now all we need to do is use a tuner and we're done, right? Well, not so fast. Guitars are imperfect instruments. It is part of their charm, but it means they were not designed to be perfectly in tune.

Try this: tune your guitar so the third – the G# on the third (G) string – of an E chord in first position sounds perfect to your ear. Now play an A chord in the same position and listen to its third – the C# on the second (B) string. You will find it is not in tune. This happens all over the neck. Without going into the science of why, it is a flaw in basic guitar design.

Guitarist/inventor Buzz Feiten and others have compensated for this by moving the nut to a different position and intonating the saddles differently. This works, although if you have been playing for many years, you may find it disconcerting.

One thing most guitarists do is compromise the tuning a bit so that neither the E nor the A chord is perfect, but both are acceptable. Later, we will discuss other techniques to work around this design issue.

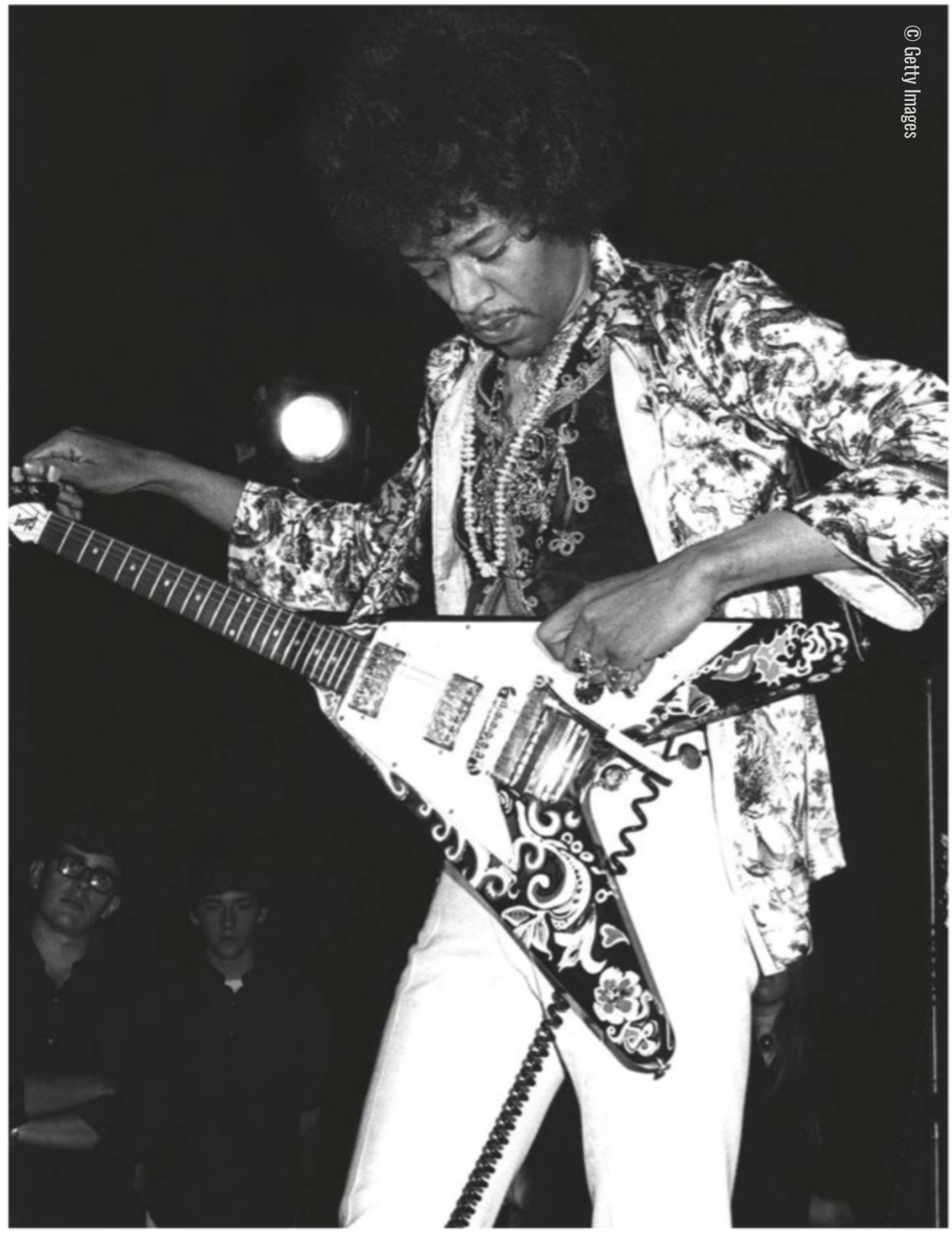
STAYING IN TUNE

Once your instrument is acceptably in tune, you want it to stay that way. The best device to ensure a guitar doesn't go out of tune is a locking system such as the Floyd Rose or a Kahler. Hugely popular during the hair-metal era, they have fallen out of favour due to their sonic properties, string-changing difficulty and, let's face it, fashion.

Still, there are ways to get through a song, if not a set, in tune. When it comes to wrapping the strings around the tuner post, less is more, especially if you use a vibrato arm. Pressing down the arm loosens the wraps, which can cause the strings to go flat when the arm returns to position. Vibrato arm or not, stretch the strings after replacing them; not once, not twice, but until they stop going flat when you pull on them. A properly cut nut that allows the string to pass through without friction is also important.

PLAYING IN TUNE

Remember we discussed the imperfect design of the guitar? While you can compensate your tuning so it sounds more or less acceptable, experienced players have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also learned how to unconsciously push, pull, and bend strings into perfect tuning. Stories abound: people would pick up Jimi Hendrix's guitar after he sounded perfectly in tune and find it horribly out.

Bill Frisell developed his habit of pushing on his guitar neck with a delay engaged to create a kind of chorusing effect largely to mask the dissonance of a guitar's inherent tuning flaws. A luthier, whose instruments were perfectly intonated, would hire me to record his parts on his guitars, because, as someone who performed live and did sessions more often, I played them more in tune than he did.

Large frets can be another issue, as they act almost like a scalloped neck, in that when you press down hard the pitch changes. When you play a chord, some fingers can press harder than others, causing certain notes to be out of tune. This can be a particular problem when hard-charging acoustic players begin playing an electric with large frets and light strings.

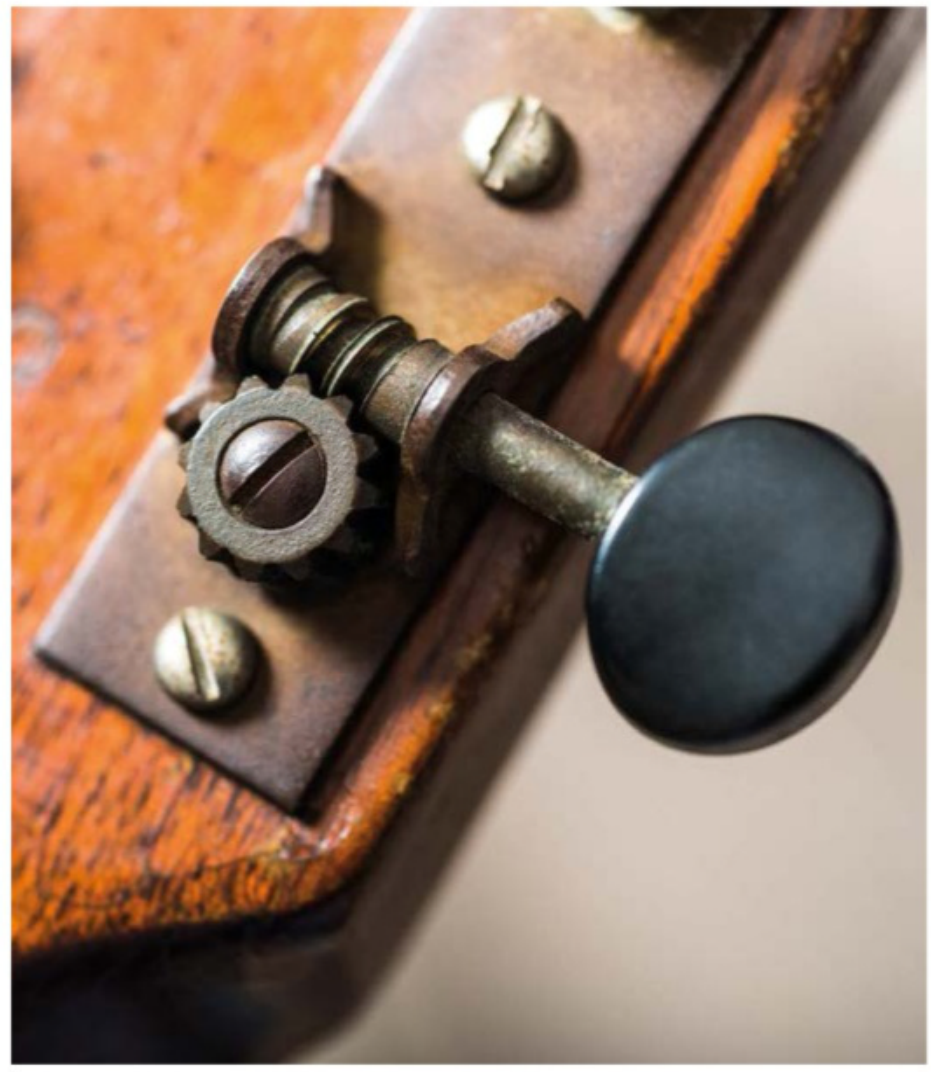
IT GETS WORSE

You've dealt with all of the above and, dammit, you still sound out of tune. One maddening issue can be a bad string. It doesn't happen often, but sometimes a string isn't manufactured properly and thus vibrates in a way that doesn't play well with others. Sometimes, you can actually see it shaking weirdly. If you can't see it, once you have made sure everything else is in place (intonation, tuning, playing technique), you can attempt to isolate the culprit by playing various chords, each leaving out one particular string. When you find the chord that sounds in tune, the missing string may be your culprit. Replace it and see if that fixes the issue.

Finally, some guitars will just never sound perfectly in tune. I had an Epiphone Riviera reissue with the Buzz Feiten setup installed, yet it still didn't sound as sweetly in tune as my 1965 Stratocaster, without the Feiten system.

One theory, confirmed in discussions with players and luthiers, is that the overtones created by one guitar's neck and body wood vibrating together are just more consonant and pleasing than another's. If these overtones are clashing in a dissonant fashion, the guitar will never sound perfectly in tune.

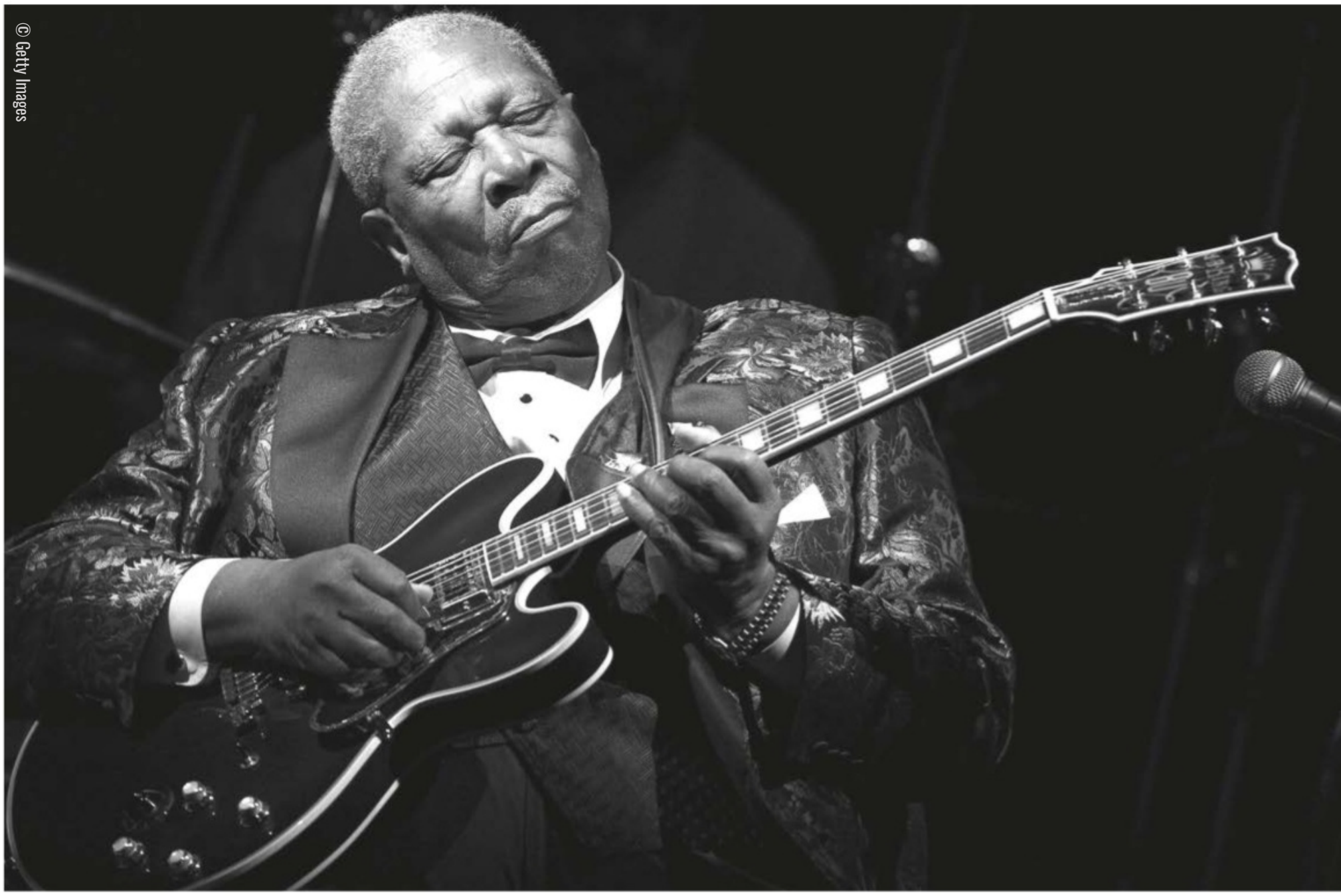
Perhaps we should have begun there, but before you buy an instrument, make sure it 'sounds' in tune and the rest will follow.



ABOVE Hendrix was known for bending his strings into tune as he played

© Getty Images

BB King was the undisputed master of combining beautifully controlled string bends with vibrato, for vocal-style guitar phrases



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ESSENTIAL BLUES LESSONS

PART 10 LEFT-HAND TECHNIQUES: STRING BENDING

WORDS LEIGH FUGE

Our series of Essential Blues lessons continues with an in-depth look at the single most expressive blues-guitar technique of all – string bending

It's time to talk about one of the most common elements of blues playing – string bending. You've seen it from BB King to Clapton to Stevie Ray Vaughan to Gilmour. Every one of our blues heroes, at some point, pushes those strings to the sky and makes them scream. String bending takes practice and patience to master. The initial stages will be tough on your fingertips, but as you progress, this will become easier. SRV supposedly used to repair his torn fingertips with Super Glue mid-gig – the perils of bending on a Strat strung with 0.013s!

It's best-practice to bend with your third finger where possible and use your first and second fingers to support the bend. Supporting the bend with multiple fingers will spread the string tension out and allow you to have more control over the motion than if you were using just one finger.

The other key aspect of string bending is pitching the bend correctly. Bending strings is often a very purposeful act where you will be aiming for another note within the scale. You can also target notes outside of your scale for more atonal or dissonant effects, but more on that later.

For this lesson, we will be using shape one and shape two of the minor pentatonic scale in the key of A minor (see below) – if you're not up to speed on these, see *Guitar.com* for our previous lessons.

The first step to great bending is to tune your ears. Let's start by looking at the three notes in Example 1, over the page. You'll notice from looking at these notes that they are from a combination of both the pentatonic shapes on the third (G) string.

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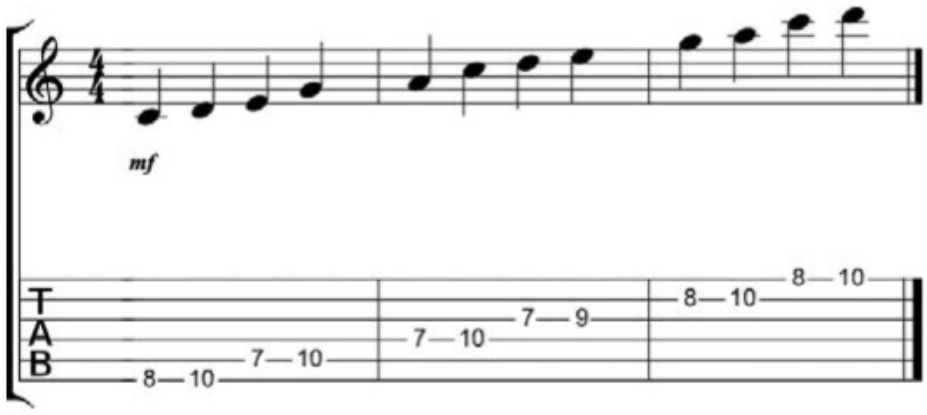
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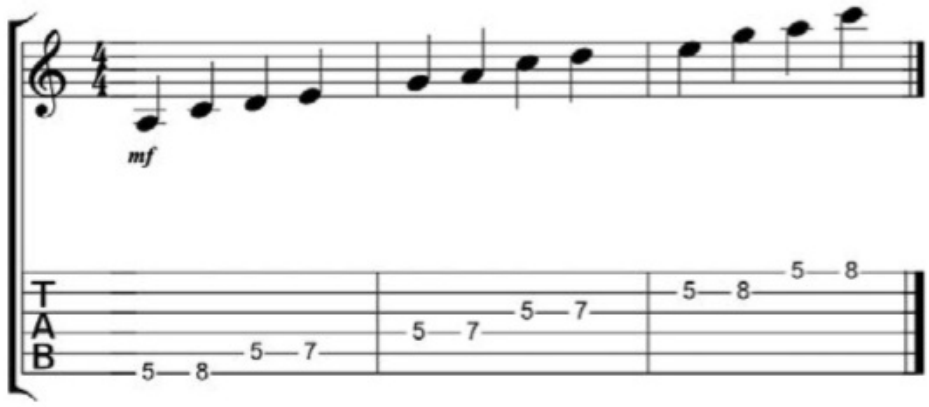
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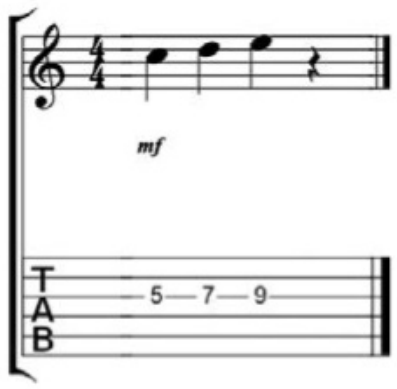
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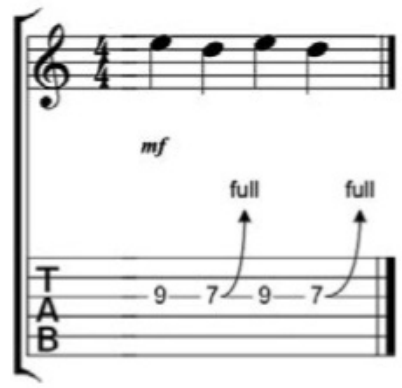

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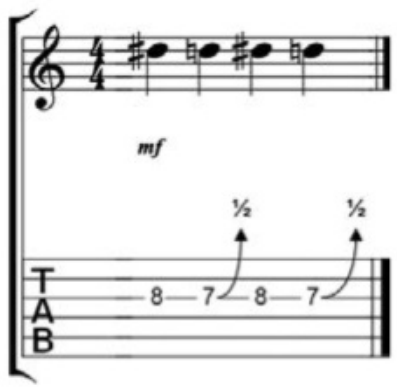
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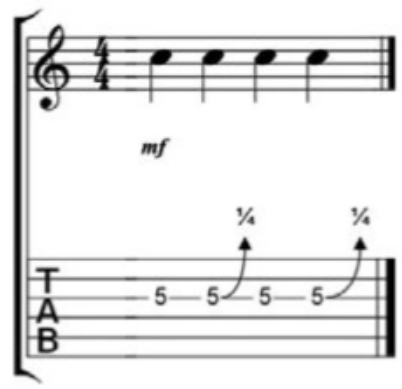
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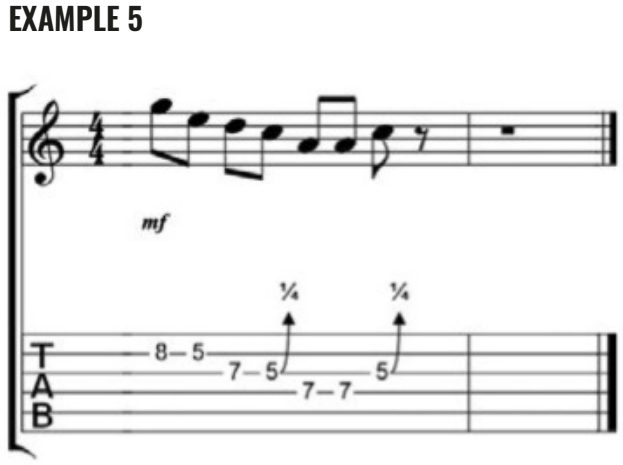
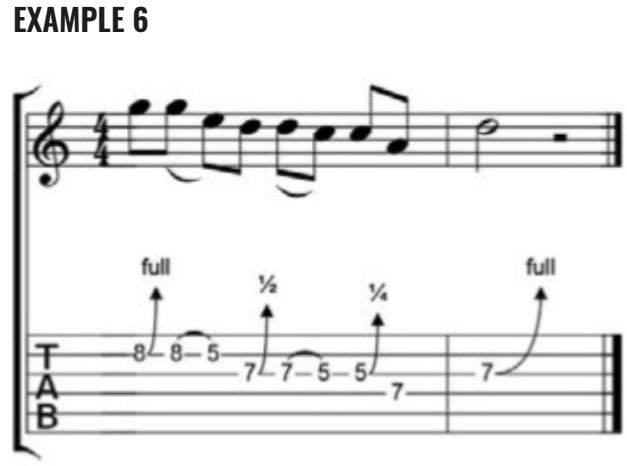

EXAMPLE 6



We will be using this three-note phrase to start our ear training.

The aim is to get familiar with the pitch of the highest note: in this case, it's the 9th fret of the third (G) string. The reason we want to become familiar with this note is because we are now going to bend the 7th fret up to the pitch of the 9th. When doing this, you want to play the higher note, then try to match it with your bend. Listen closely to the pitching and trust your ears.

You should think carefully about your bent note; do you hear the same pitch at the fretted note? Does it sound too high or two low? Hearing these differences will allow you to make corrections.

This type of bend is called a full-tone (or full step) bend. It involves bending the note up the equivalent pitch of two frets.

There are two other types of bends that you will use a lot in blues playing. Half-tone (or half step) bends are when you bend the note up the equivalent pitch of one fret. In Exercise 3, we are doing the same as above, but now we are using the 8th fret as our target pitch.

Quarter-tone (Or quarter step) bends are also used a lot in blues playing. Quarter-step bends fall into a group of bends known as microtonal bends which are bends between the available notes. The guitar fretboard is laid out in semitone steps, so a quarter tone would indicate a pitch between two frets. This bend is typical of many blues players vocabulary and contributes to the very 'vocal' sound many of the greats achieve with their playing. BB King was a big user of these bends to make his guitar seem as though it was talking.

A quarter-tone bend does not have a target pitch that we can recognise by playing a fretted note. To perform a quarter-tone bend, you would bend the string in the same way, but you would not push it up as far as you would for a half-tone bend.

When working on quarter-tone bends (Ex 4) you can play a note four times and apply the alternate bending on the second and fourth repeat, as with the previous exercises. With this smaller bend, you are looking for an audible rise in pitch but not to the extent of it going up a fret in pitch.

Quarter-tone bends are often found on the lower end of a scale shape and done

with the first finger, but they can actually be applied anywhere.

Bending strings is a great way to add character to any existing pentatonic runs you may do already. The lick in Ex 6 is typical of where you might find these types of bends within a standard blues lick.

The first bend is the 8th fret on the second (B) string, which is a full-tone bend that targets the 10th fret of the same string. The 10th fret is a note in the second shape of the minor pentatonic scale; this links to the idea of targeting other notes in the scale. The next bend is a half-tone bend from the 7th to the 8th fret of the third (G). The 8th fret of the third (G) string is not a note that's in the minor pentatonic scale, but it is an interval known as the $^{\flat}$V (flat fifth) which has the nickname of the 'blues note'. If you add the $^{\flat}$V to the pentatonic scale it creates a bluesy overtone. This note will sit slightly outside of the key, so will cause dissonance if lingered on for too long – but a kind of dissonance that works with this style.

You will also notice the quarter-tone bend on the 5th fret of the third (G) string; this will add a little vocal cadence towards the end of the descending phrase. The final bend is the 7th fret on the third (G) string up to the pitch of the 9th, which is also in the second shape of the scale.

TRY IT YOURSELF

By this point in our Essential Blues lesson series, you may have already started to form some of your own patterns using the scales and techniques we have discussed. Back in lesson six, we talked about the idea of combining some rhythmic phrases with some lead embellishments. This is the perfect technique to revisit with string bending added to your trick bag.

When playing any of the phrases you might have used previously in that lesson, you can substitute some of the notes for string bending. Target other notes in the scale shape, or use the half-tone and quarter-tone bends to give your playing more of a vocal fluency.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leigh Fuge is a guitar teacher and professional musician from Swansea in the UK. He's taught hundreds of students face-to-face and via the MGR Music platform. To find a qualified guitar tutor in your area, visit mgrmusic.com

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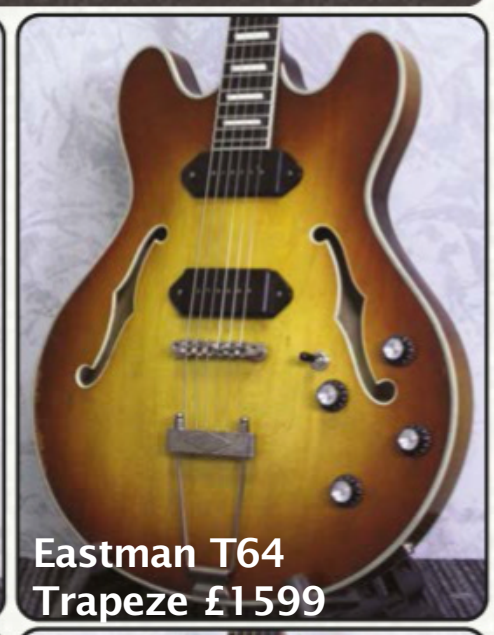
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Learn how to play John Frusciante-style fingerpicked chords with our lesson

CHORD CLINIC

HOW TO PLAY RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS-STYLE FINGERPICKED CHORDS

WORDS ROD FOGG

In their long career, the Red Hot Chili Peppers have had several hot-shot guitar players, but none have been as influential as the mercurial John Frusciante. Here, we take a look at his approach to fingerpicked chords…

John Frusciante recorded five classic albums with the Red Hot Chili Peppers, along with 11 solo albums to date and many guest and production credits. In the first of a two-part examination of his playing, we begin by focusing on his use of fingerpicking.

Figure 1 introduces three chords, all of which are triads, consisting only of root note, major or minor third, and fifth. In the B augmented chord you might be surprised to see the open third (G) string described as 'F double sharp'. The reason is that the fifth in a B major chord would be F♯, but a B augmented chord requires a sharpened fifth, hence the double sharp.

Begin by playing all three notes of each chord together, using your thumb to pick the lowest note and index and middle fingers to pick the high notes. Then, counting a fairly fast four to the bar, play the bass notes on each beat, fitting the top notes around them. The E minor chord should get two bars, with C and B augmented getting a bar each.

The fret-hand fingering we have given works for us, but feel free to experiment and find what suits you. Aim for a smooth legato and let the notes ring. Looking at the harmony here, while augmented chords are unusual in rock music, B major is the dominant chord (chord V) of E minor and so leads naturally to it; the augmented chord serves to raise the tension at the end of each phrase and push even more strongly towards the E minor.

Frusciante's playing is not always as complex as figure 1. In figure 2, simply play the four notes of the chord from low to high. Then repeat the last three notes to make a seven-note pattern and shift to the next chord. Alternate between F♯m and A three times and then hit the open E chord and let it ring. This is a good example of Frusciante's ability to use simple chords and come up with a memorable guitar part.

The chords in figure 3 are also intended to be played as arpeggios. Play the bass note first with your thumb, then use your ring, middle, and index fingers to play a descending arpeggio on the remaining notes of the chord. Notice how the slash chord, G/B, makes a smooth transition between the A minor and C major chords, and the

FIGURE 1

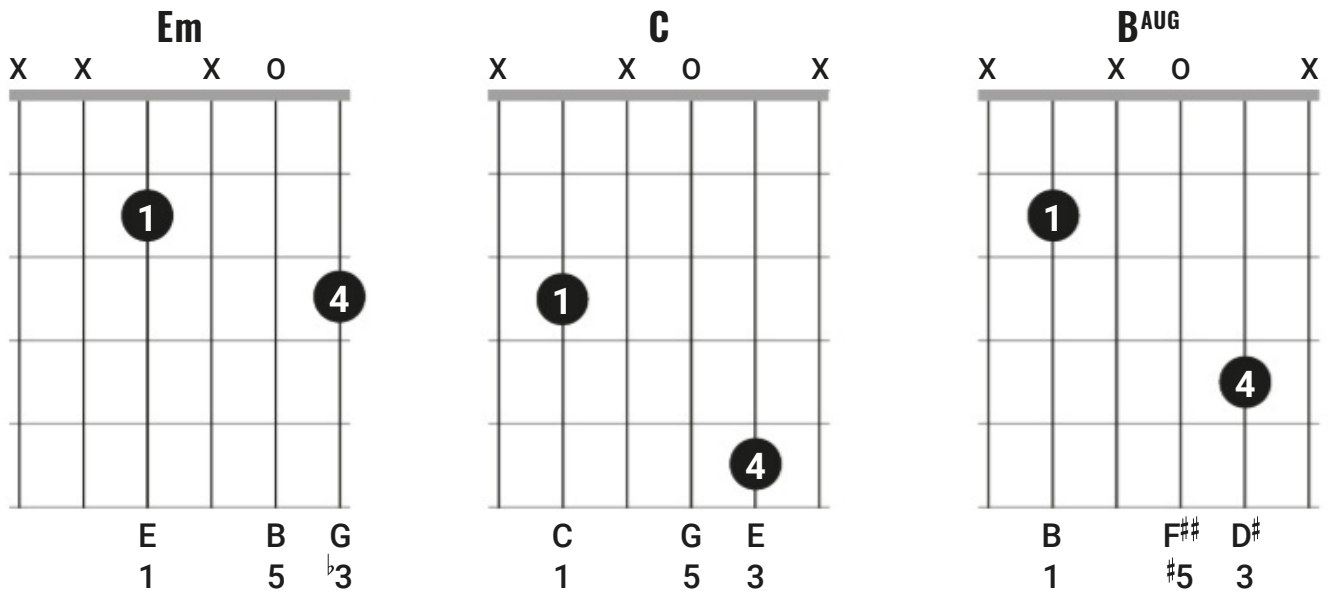
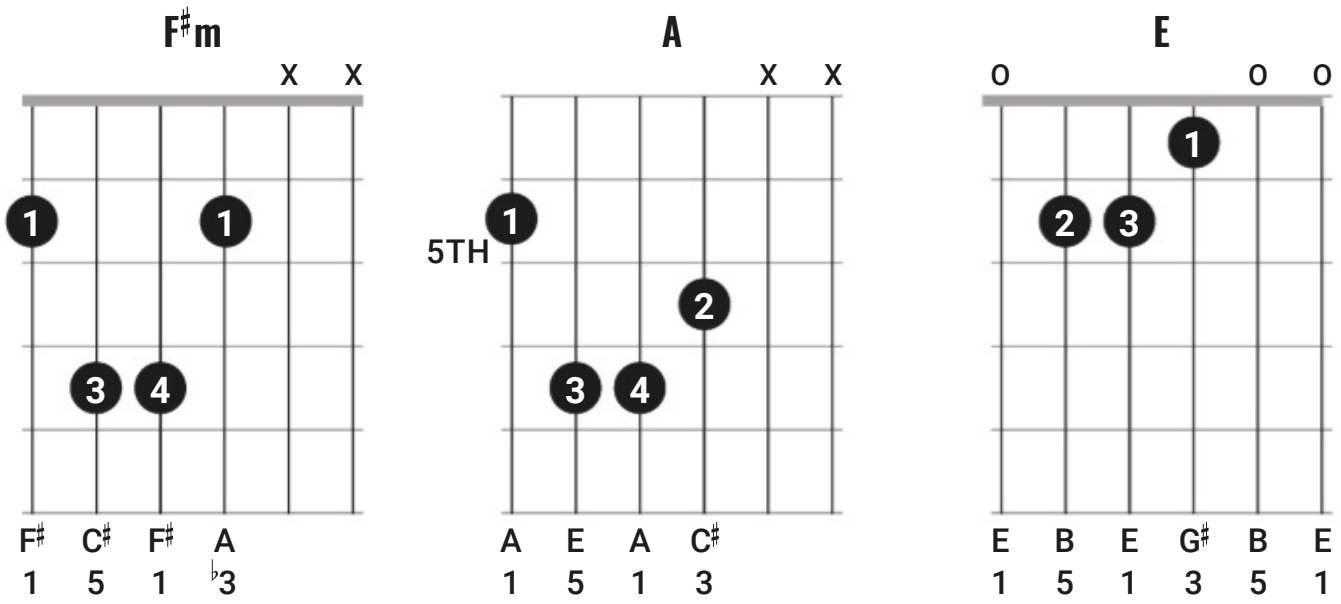


FIGURE 2



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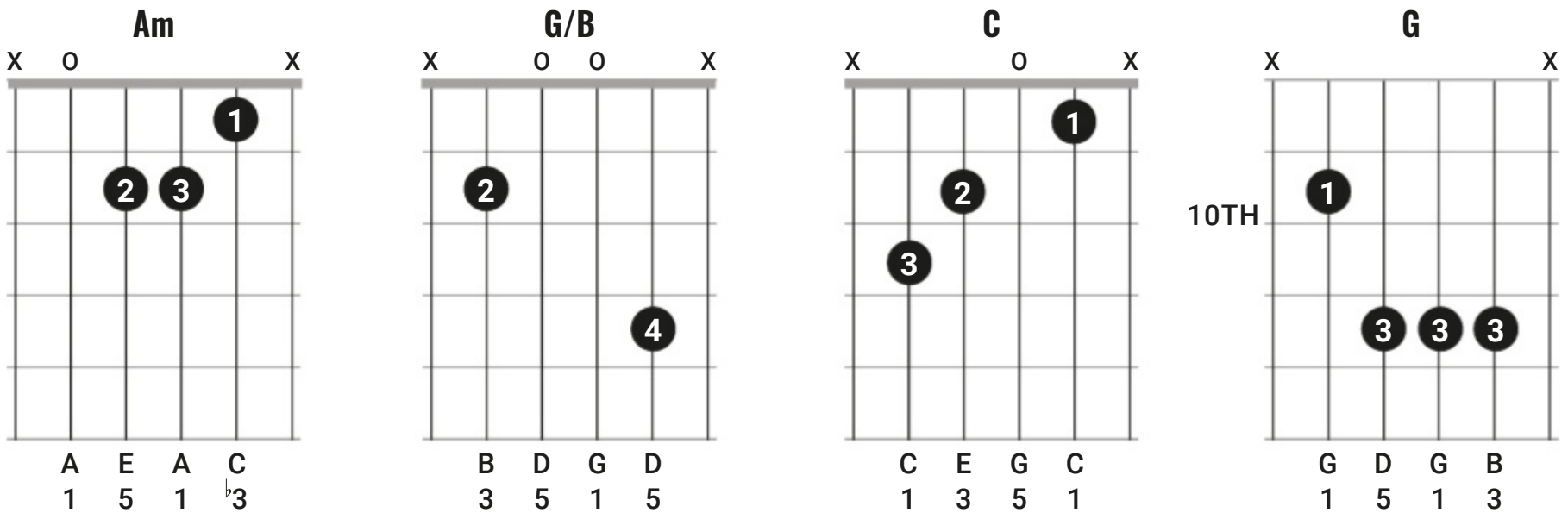
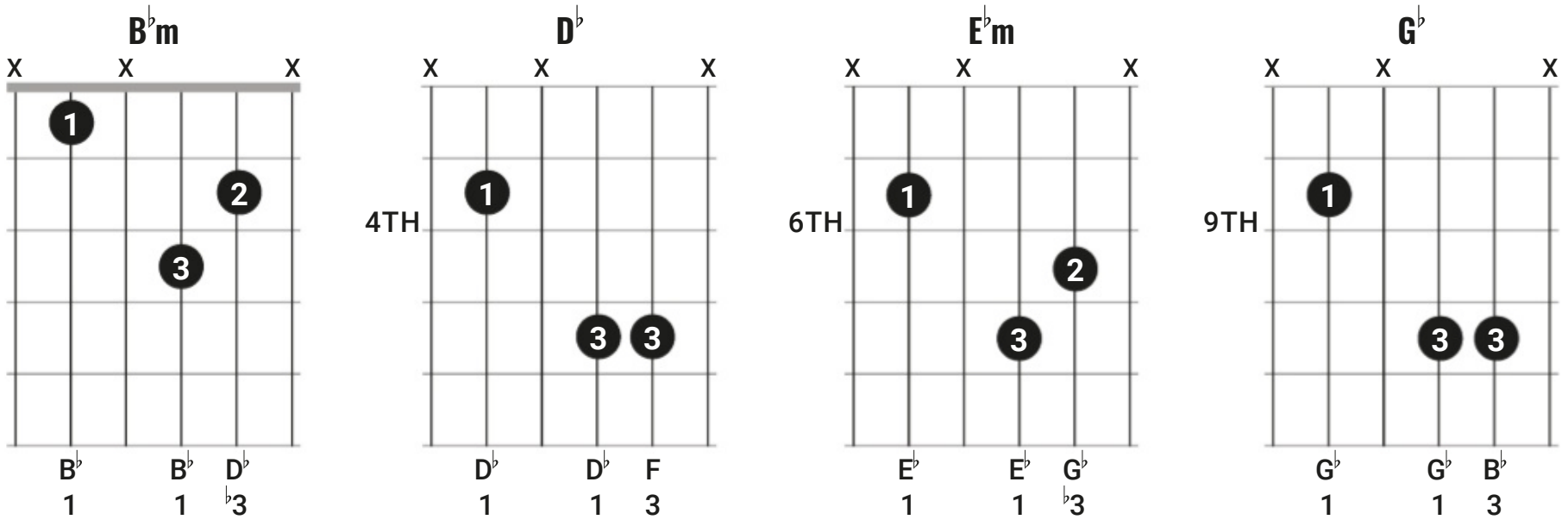


FIGURE 4



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JJ Tesla valves have a worldwide reputation for excellent sound quality. These valves are one of our most popular ranges for our trade and service customers. Our full trade and quantity details on JJ and other popular valve brands are on our website with quantity prices starting as low as 10 pieces per type. Here are some examples of our JJ quantity prices:

ECC81	10 Pcs	£7.20 Each	EL34 mk2	16 Pcs	£12.00 Each
ECC82	10 Pcs	£7.20 Each	E34L	16 Pcs	£13.50 Each
ECC83-S	10 Pcs	£7.50 Each	EL84	16 Pcs	£7.20 Each
ECC83-S	20 Pcs	£7.20 Each	6L6GC	16 Pcs	£13.20 Each
ECC83-S	40 Pcs	£6.90 Each	6V6GTS	16 Pcs	£12.00 Each
ECC83-MG	10 Pcs	£9.00 Each	5881	16 Pcs	£13.20 Each
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ECC83-7025-STR	£14.40	5881-Mil Spec	£19.20
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FIGURE 5

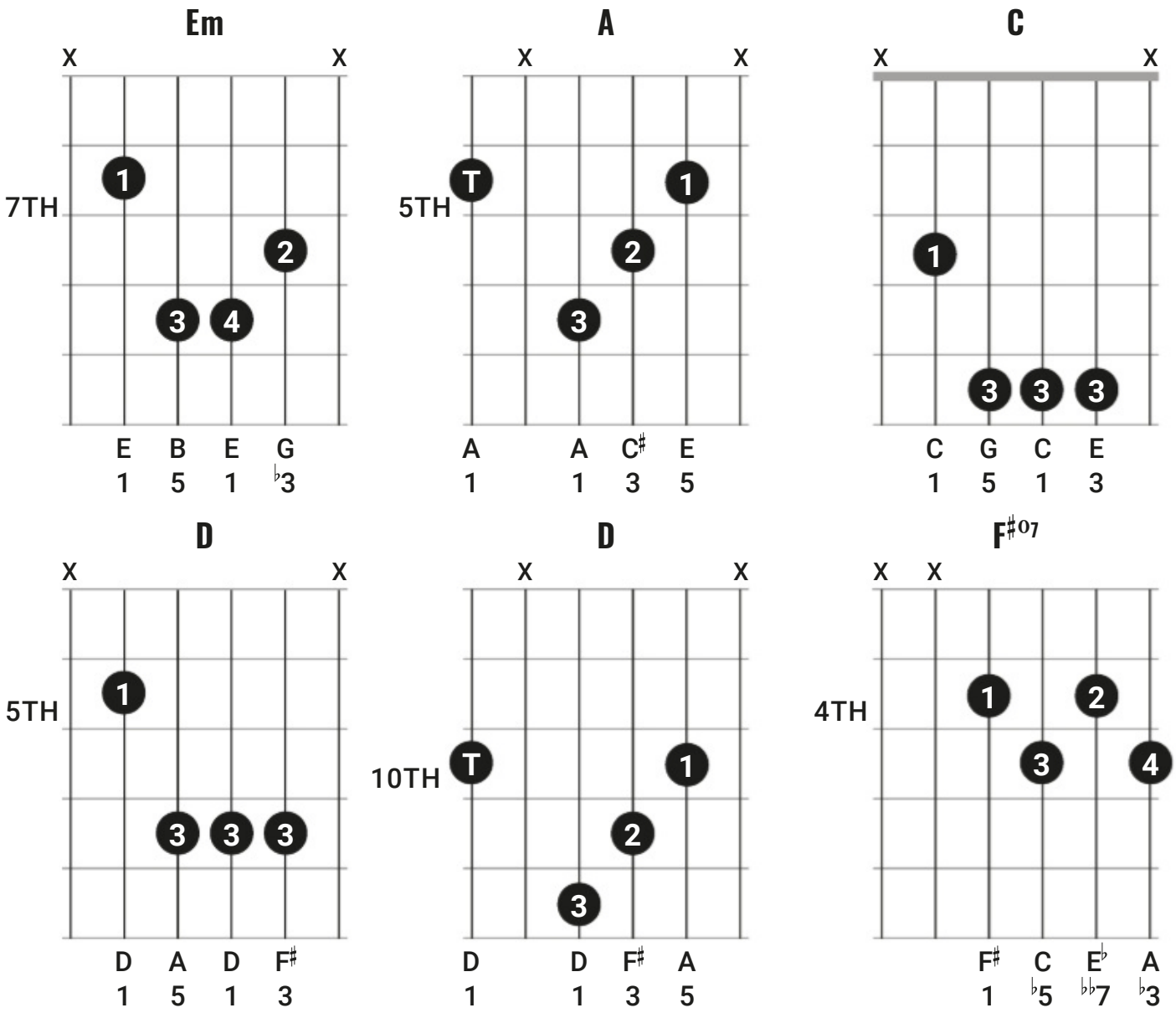
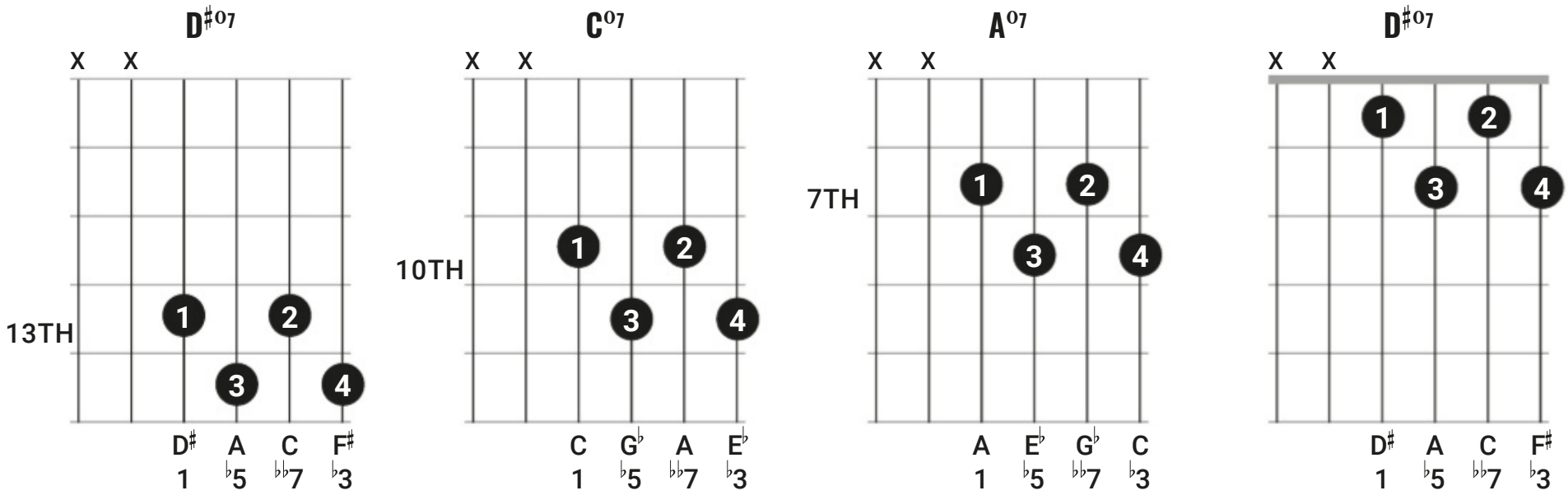


FIGURE 6



tricky leap to the high G major chord adds a surprise to the chord sequence. This repeatable four-bar pattern will work as a B section to figure 1.

Figure 4 is played in a similar way, starting with the thumb, but using middle and index fingers to play the remaining notes of the chord. Here, the chord is not even a triad, as there are no fifths in any of these chords. They simply consist of a root, doubled at the octave and a major or minor third as appropriate. Once again, this is a repeatable four-chord sequence, which the Red Hot Chili Peppers are expert at. Intelligent note selection from Frusciante again creates a memorable guitar part.

We've looked at Frusciante's use of augmented chords and in figures 5 and 6, we take a look at his use of the other seldom-seen chord, the diminished seventh. In figure 5, there seem to be too many chords for a four-chord sequence, but the idea is to begin with the E minor, A, C and the first D chord. Play an arpeggio on each chord using the thumb, index, middle and ring fingers. On repeat, substitute the high-position D major chord for the one at the fifth fret. Then repeat the first pattern and fourth time through, go to the F sharp diminished chord instead of the D major.

This is where we head to figure 6; if you include the F♯ø7 in figure 5, you have five different positions of diminished seventh chords. This type of chord is unique in that each note of the chord is a minor third from the next: F♯, A, C, E♭, F♯ and so on. So any note can be the root – F sharp diminished seventh is exactly the same four notes as E flat diminished seventh, or A diminished seventh; so we could have named all of these five chords F sharp diminished seven.

The idea is to hold onto the arpeggio at the end of figure 5 for a couple of bars and then play all five diminished seventh shapes from the highest to lowest, stretching them out over two bars. The diminished sevenths can lead smoothly back to figure 1 and the E minor chord where we came in. G

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TALKBOX

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INTERVIEW JOSH GARDNER

The Feeder frontman and Jazzmaster fanatic tells us about the guitars he's loved and lost, the band's most embarrassing onstage moments and his vintage gear obsessions…

The moment it all started…
"I got my first guitar – a black Les Paul copy by Avon – at the age of 10 or 11 after doing well at school. I remember being inspired by the sixth-form band and also my brother's early record collection. I used to gaze at the musical instrument section in my mum's catalogues for hours!"

I couldn't live without my…
"One of my vintage Jazzmasters and a nice old Gibson J-45, or my J-200 or Guild M-20 acoustics."

The one that got away…
"I sold a great hardtail Fender Strat after recording *Polythene*. I had a bad refret done and it killed the feel and sound of the guitar for me. I decided to trade it in against a vintage '64 Fender Jazzmaster. I also recently had a lovely Gretsch Country Gent stolen from the Feeder lockup, which has never shown up."

My dream signature guitar…
"It would just be a Jazzmaster with a few GN-specific mods."

The first thing I typically play when I pick up a guitar…
"It depends, but usually a few nice open chords or an old-school riff. If it's an acoustic, then maybe a bit of fingerpicking."

The best advice I've ever been given…
"It's all about the tunes!"

My Spinal Tap moment…
"There's a few, but I remember us all getting lost on the way to the stage as we could hear the intro music playing! Also our live guitarist at the time, Dean, falling over the monitors but continuing to play on his back. I think it was Reading or possibly, Glastonbury.

"I was crying with laughter as his guitar tech tried to pick him up, but Dean just wanted to stay there till the song had finished and make a graceful return – classic Tap moment!"

My guilty pleasure…
"Vintage guitars and gear. I also enjoy a bit of classic 80s rock and pop cranked up after a few beers."

I wish I'd been in…
"The Beatles were immense as far as writing talent, but I also think Led Zeppelin would have been a great ride…"

I wish I was there…
"Jimi Hendrix at the Isle Of Wight and Woodstock festivals must've been mind-blowing!"

The most important thing I have on my rider…
"Champagne, vodka and a nice bottle of red. Also an avocado and shitloads of water. I drink a lot of water to keep the voice happy."

I wish I could play…
"Flamenco would be interesting and maybe a bit of classical and old-school jazz." G

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